

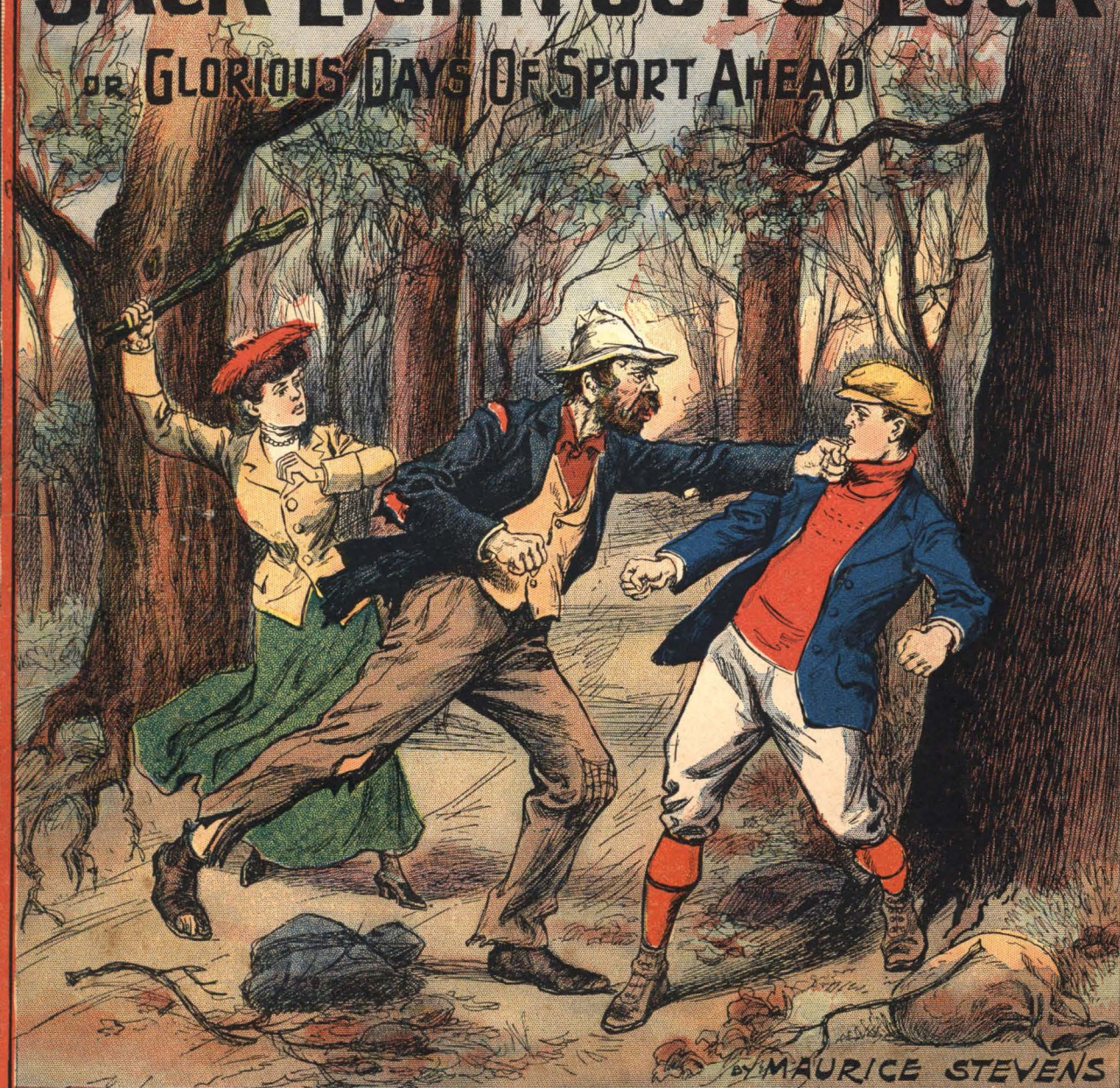
No. 45

5 CENTS

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S LUCK

OR GLORIOUS DAYS OF SPORT AHEAD



It was lucky for Jack that Kate Strawn inherited some of the spunk shown by her Puritan ancestors at Lexington and Bunker Hill.

2.00



**Publishers' Note.** "Teach the American boy how to become an athlete, and lay the foundation for a Constitution greater than that of the United States."—Wise sayings from "Tip Top." There has never been a time when the boys of this great country took so keen an interest in all manly and health-giving sports as they do to-day. As proof of this witness the record-breaking throngs that attend college struggles on the gridiron, as well as athletic and baseball games, and other tests of endurance and skill. In a multitude of other channels this love for the "life strenuous" is making itself manifest, so that, as a nation, we are rapidly forging to the front as seekers of honest sport. Recognizing this "handwriting on the wall," we have concluded that the time has arrived to give this vast army of young enthusiasts a publication devoted exclusively to invigorating out-door life. We feel we are justified in anticipating a warm response from our sturdy American boys, who are sure to revel in the stirring phases of sport and adventure, through which our characters pass from week to week.

# ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

Issued Weekly. By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1905, in the Office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C., by THE WINNER LIBRARY CO., 105 West Fifteenth St., New York, N. Y.

No. 45.

NEW YORK, December 16, 1905.

Price Five Cents.

## JACK LIGHTFOOT'S LUCK;

OR,

### Glorious Days of Sport Ahead.

By MAURICE STEVENS.

#### CHARACTERS IN THIS STORY.

**Jack Lightfoot**, the best all-round athlete in Cranford or vicinity, a lad clear of eye, clean of speech, and, after he had conquered a few of his faults, possessed of a faculty for *doing things* while others were talking, that by degrees caused him to be looked upon as the natural leader in all the sports Young America delights in—a boy who in learning to conquer himself put the power into his hands to wrest victory from others.

**Tom Lightfoot**, Jack's cousin, and sometimes his rival; though their striving for the mastery was always of the friendly, generous kind. Tom was called the "Book-Worm" by his fellows, on account of his love for studying such secrets of nature as practical observers have discovered and published; so that he possessed a fund of general knowledge calculated to prove useful when his wandering spirit took him abroad into strange lands.

**Ned Skeen**, of impulsive, nervous temperament, but a good friend of Jack's.

**Lafe Lampton**, a big, hulking chap, with an ever present craving for something to eat. Lafe always had his appetite along, and proved a staunch friend of our hero through thick and thin.

**Phil Kirtland**, a rival of Jack's, but who was not averse to winning a little glory at times, even if he had to share it with Lightfoot.

**Katie Strawn** and **Neellie Conner**, two Cranford girls, friends of Jack.

**Brodie Strawn**, a stout youth, Kate's brother, and once Phil's backer, but who of late had come to regard Jack as a good fellow.

**Murdock**, the tramp.

**Jerry Splain**, hostler of the Cranford Hotel.

**Mr. Henley**, clerk of same.

**Kennedy**, the town constable.

#### CHAPTER I.

##### A DISCUSSION ON LUCK.

"Oh, it isn't luck that counts most in this world," cried Tom Lightfoot, wisely wagging his head at the other boys, with whom he was having quite an animated discussion. "Intelligence, grit, energy and perseverance—these are the qualities that enable a man to get a lead over his fellows. Don't talk to me of luck, boys. There's nothing great in that."

"Oh, I don't know," drawled Lafe Lampton, with sort of a quizzical grin at Tom. "Luck cuts some ice, Tom, and don't you forget it. I'm a great believer in luck."

And Lafe, who was considerable of a joker in his way, slyly winked at the other boys and then took a resounding bite out of a big, rosy-red apple which he had drawn from his pocket and for a time had been deliberately polishing on his coat sleeve.

Lafe's sly wink was equivalent to intimating that this was only a good chance to get Tom "on the



string," as the saying goes, and start him into one of his philosophical arguments. For Tom Lightfoot in his quiet way was quite a student both of books and of human nature, and the other boys sometimes found considerable harmless amusement in "winding him up," as Lafe had been heard to put it.

The boys were gathered that evening in the shed room at Jack Lightfoot's home and for some time they had been engaged in discussing a matter which presently will appear in what follows.

The party consisted not only of Jack Lightfoot and his Cousin Tom, but also Lafe and Brodie Strawn, together with Ned Skeen and Phil Kirtland, the two latter being seated on a tool-chest in one corner of the room.

Jack Lightfoot was engaged in cleaning his fowling-piece, which he had used that day; while Tom, who had made the wise remarks introducing this story, was perched on a bench at one side of the room and was chiefly addressing himself to Lafe Lampton, through whose good-natured attempt to "string him" he plainly saw.

It was then early in the month of December. To be accurate, it was the fourth of December, just three weeks before Christmas.

What glorious anticipations that one word arouses in both young and old!

Christmas and the holidays!

The days of royal good feeling and brotherly love, of generous impulses and eager offerings; the days of the gift-laden tree and the stuffed stocking, and the time of the long holiday vacation with its endless variety of glorious winter sports.

It certainly might go without saying that the Cranford boys were looking forward to these coming days with no ordinary anticipations, and also were preparing for them with more than ordinary zest, these glorious days of sports ahead.

Incidentally, while talking of them, Tom Lightfoot had given utterance to the remarks mentioned in the beginning. Tom observed Lafe slily wink, moreover, but it did not disturb him in the least and he quickly responded:

"You may believe in luck as much as you like, Lafe, but I tell you it doesn't figure very strongly in a long race."

"That's where you and I differ," grinned Lafe, as well as any boy could grin with his mouth full of apple.

"In the long run, Lafe, the element of luck only

stands itself off," continued Tom with a good deal of wisdom.

"Think so?" chuckled Lafe, tickled at keeping Tom going.

"There is both good luck and bad luck, Lafe, and on the whole you'll find that they about offset each other."

"Oh, I don't know."

"A boy or man who depends upon luck to pull him through the battle of life," protested Tom, unmoved, "will end by finding himself in the ditch or the trenches, not upon the redoubt or the battlement at which every true warrior fearlessly aims. You can safely go your pile, Lafe, that I am right in that."

"Words from the mouth of the sage," drawled Lafe, with a merry twinkle in his eye, at which remark and look Tom Lightfoot fell to laughing and added:

"Oh, I see you're trying to string me, Lafe, but you'll find that there's a lot of truth in my remarks."

Brodie Strawn now put in his oar.

"You bet there is, Tom," he said approvingly. "Luck isn't anything to be depended upon in this world."

"Oh, bosh!" cried Lafe, spurred to maintaining his position by Brodie's dipping into the discussion. "Luck cuts more ice than you fellows seem to think. Take that man Dillon for example."

"Well, what of him?" demanded Tom.

"Isn't he playing dead lucky?" argued Lafe, with increasing animation. "Isn't it lucky for him that the stuff stolen from Dillworthy's house can't be found? Isn't it lucky for him that the lot of silverware, as well as the plunder of several other robbers, can't be located? If that plunder could be found by the authorities it would be easy enough to convict the rascal of the crimes which he now so persistently denies and the punishment for which he seems likely to escape with the help of his shrewd and unprincipled lawyer. Doesn't luck figure in that? I should think that Dillon would consider himself mighty lucky."

The man mentioned, Bill Dillon, was then in the Cranford jail with a man named Jim Wagstaff, both charged with several robberies which had been committed in the town.

These two men had been arrested about a day or two before, both having been caught at Dillon's house by Jack Lightfoot and Lafe, where the former had imprisoned Prof. Jeremy Sampson, one of the Cranford school-teachers, who had seen them burying some silverware in the thick woods between Dillon's house



and a wild section of the country known as Hickman's swamp.

Jack Lightfoot and Lafe had been gunning in the swamp that day and it was through their efforts that the professor had been found and the two rascals arrested. With the help of a remarkably keen lawyer, however, though the evidence was very strong against them, both Dillion and Wagstaff were preparing to make a hard legal fight to evade conviction for the robberies and to escape with only a penalty for having abducted Prof. Sampson.

It was of these two men and the unusual situation that now existed in connection with them that Lafe Sampson had spoken.

"Good luck, eh?" laughed Tom Lightfoot. "I should say, figured from your standpoint, Lafe, that they had a streak of bad luck when you and Jack so cleverly effected their arrest."

"Well, I'll admit that much," said Lafe.

"Which proves what I told you in the beginning," added Tom; "that the element of luck only offsets itself in a long race."

"It was only Jack Lightfoot's luck that made him the one to discover and rescue the professor," thought Phil Kirtland with a slight feeling of jealousy, for there existed between them some little rivalry.

Kirtland would not have made such a remark aloud, however, and now Jack Lightfoot himself entered the stream of talk after a period of attentive silence on his part.

"You're both right, boys," said he, closing the breech of his gun and looking up in his manly fashion. "Luck counts for something, there's no getting around that. But Tom is correct when he says that luck is not a thing to depend upon. A chap must keep digging in his toes all the time in this world, and very likely luck also will then help him along. That's the way I look at it."

"And it's a mighty good way, too," declared Ned Skeen with an approving nod.

"When is Dillon's trial coming off, Jack, do you know?" Kirtland now inquired as the argument appeared to be amicably settled.

"It's been postponed for a time," replied Jack, "in the hope that the stolen property which he and Wagstaff have buried may be discovered. Unless that can be found, Phil, it may be difficult to convict them."

"Yet everybody knows they're guilty," protested Kirtland.

"Everybody may think so, Phil, but at law their

guilt must be proven by evidence, not merely belief," replied Lightfoot.

"Yet they were heard, just before they were arrested, to mention themselves in connection with the robberies."

"That has some weight, I'll admit, but it's not conclusive."

"I imagine not."

"Some tangible evidence must be produced," continued Jack; "and that naturally consists of the stolen property. If that could be found the case would be complete."

"It's odd that Prof. Sampson can't tell where he saw them bury it."

"No, not so very odd," replied Jack. "He knows only that it was under a pine tree and, as he was much excited at the time, he can't fix on the locality. The woods all through that section are quite thick and there are something like a thousand pine trees under which he might have seen them."

"But you and Lafe found his basket which he dropped at the time," said Kirtland.

"That is true."

"And he must have dropped it somewhere near the spot, and I should think you fellows might be able to locate the place."

"We labor under the same difficulty as the professor, Phil," replied Jack with a headshake.

"How is that?"

"We had tramped nearly a mile from the swamp and through the woods that afternoon and we now have no definite bearings as to the place where we found the basket. We only know that it was some little distance from a narrow road and somewhere between Dillon's house and the swamp."

"I see."

"There are no end of pine trees all through that section."

"But didn't you drop the basket again, Jack, nearly where you picked it up?" asked Brodie Strawn.

"Yes, I did, but it can't be found now," replied Jack. "It may have been discovered by some person and carried away since then. If it could be found just where we dropped it, Brodie, it would come very nearly locating the burial place of the stolen silverware."

"Have you and Lafe been up there to look for it?"

"Yes, twice, but with no success."

"Kennedy, the constable, is bound to find the goods," observed Tom. "He has half-a-score of men searching the woods in that section and there's a reward of



five hundred dollars offered to any person who will locate the burial place of the stolen property."

"So I've heard," nodded Jack. "It is offered by Mr. Dillworthy, the man whose house last was robbed."

"He's all right, too," declared Ned Skeen. "He's a white man from his toes up."

"It would be great, boys, if we could land that reward," remarked Jack.

"Gee whiz!" exclaimed Lafe with an extraordinary grin of delight. "What wouldn't I do with five hundred dollars? I'd buy an automobile the first thing."

Jack Lightfoot laughed amusedly and arose to place his gun in an elk-horn rack on the wall. Then he turned gravely to his companions and startled them all by saying roundly:

"I've got a proposition to submit to you, boys. It's a good one, too, and I hope you'll all regard it as I do."

## CHAPTER II.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT'S PROPOSITION.

Jack Lightfoot's announcement awakened an immediate and lively interest, and Brodie Strawn quickly demanded:

"What is it, Jack? What's your proposition?"

Jack laughed at the eagerness displayed and proceeded to explain.

"I'll come to it presently, boys," said he. "To begin with, however, I wish to bring several facts to your notice."

"Namely?" queried Kirtland.

"There are a good many uses to which we fellows as a body could put five hundred dollars," continued Jack more gravely. "We have just finished a long baseball and football season in which our uniforms and other equipments have seen hard usage and are much the worse for wear."

"I should say so," cried Lafe laughing. "Mine looks like the breaking up of a hard winter."

"We need an entire new set of uniforms," replied Jack. "We also need new material in a number of sporting lines and we could to very good advantage add a number of new and desirable appliances to the gym."

"That's right, too."

"All of these things cost a deal of money," continued Jack; "and while the school committee are uniformly kind in their appropriations to these ends and the town people very generous with subscriptions for pro-

viding us with many things, it seems hardly right that we should constantly call on one or the other for what we require."

"That is true as gospel, Jack," declared Kirtland in accents of hearty approval.

"It not only would appear better but be better if we now and then could raise a good fat sum of money for ourselves by some mutual effort."

"That's the stuff," nodded Ned Skeen.

"I begin to see what you are driving at," remarked Kirtland.

"Evidently at that five hundred," put in Brodie Strawn with eyes lighting.

"Right!" exclaimed Jack bowing.

"Gee whittaker! it would be great stuff, Jack, if one of us could land it!" cried Lafe with eyes opening wider.

"One of us, eh?" smiled Lightfoot, turning in his direction. "That is not exactly my idea, Lafe."

"No?"

"Not for one of us to land it."

"What do you mean?"

"That brings me to the proposition I wish to make," explained Jack with much earnestness.

"Out with it, old man."

"To me, boys, the matter looks about like this," Jack went on. "If one of us went out to hunt for the place where Dillon has buried that silverware there's only a very small chance that he would find it. That's been demonstrated already and it's utterly improbable that either Dillon or Wagstaff will reveal the location, since their escape from conviction depends upon their own secrecy and the inability of searchers to discover this hidden evidence against them."

"Oh, they'll keep dumb, all right, there's no doubt about that," cried Lafe.

"Individually, then, we'd stand but little chance of finding the hiding-place," continued Jack. "As a body, however, including the members of the ball nine and the football eleven, we could make a very elaborate and thorough search and with a fair possibility of meeting with success."

"That's true, Jack," nodded Kirtland.

"But what's your idea, Jack?" inquired Tom Lightfoot. "Do you propose whoever finds this plunder would have the reward?"

"By no means, Tom."

"Who, then?"

"My idea is something like this," replied Jack earnestly. "I propose that we boys, including all the members of the teams mentioned as well as those of



both the high school and the academy, enter into an agreement to aid in the search."

"All hands will readily do that, Jack."

"In case our search proves successful, however, and one of us discovers the hiding-place of this stolen property," continued Jack, "the reward offered shall not be claimed by him as an individual, but shall come to us as a whole, to be placed in the bank and used as a fund for the purchase of such sporting equipments as from time to time we require."

"Eureka!" cried Kirtland heartily. "That's not so bad."

"Well, boys, that is my proposition," concluded Jack. "Now, what do you think of it?"

"It's great!"

"Out of sight!"

"The boys will jump at it."

These were some of the opinions promptly expressed in reply to Jack Lightfoot's question, and the hearty voices of the several speakers evinced the enthusiasm with which his manly proposition was received.

"I thought all of you would favor it," said he, well pleased with their approval.

"I should say so," cried Kirtland. "Besides having such a fund, which we may contrive to make a permanent feature of our sporting interests, the step will be well looked upon by everybody in town."

"There is no doubt of that, Phil," nodded Tom.

"It will be great stuff for our ball nine to have a bank account," said Lafe. "Gee! but I can imagine the uniforms we'll come out in next season."

"Silk shirts, eh?" laughed Brodie.

"Nothing less, Brodie, if I have my say."

"Well, I wouldn't figure upon any fund before we locate the plunder and see the color of the money," said Jack. "We haven't earned the promised five hundred, and even before we make any attempt to do so on the line I've suggested there are a number of details to be considered and various plans to be laid and adopted."

"Such as what, Jack?"

"All of the other boys must be consulted and brought to our way of thinking."

"Not one of them will dissent."

"I think you're right, yet all must be bound by the same agreement," replied Jack. "Not only must each consent to aid in this search, but if his search is successful and he proves to be the one to earn the offered reward he must agree that it shall be turned into the general fund suggested."

"With a little hustling," said Kirtland, "all of that can be arranged to-morrow morning."

"I think so, too."

"As for us," cried Brodie Strawn, "we can bind ourselves to the agreement to-night."

"With the understanding," added Jack, "that each will do his part to-morrow to perfect the entire organization."

"Exactly."

"This goes, then, does it?" demanded Lafe.

"That's for us all to say," replied Jack.

"We don't require it on paper, do we?"

"I think it will be better to have it on paper, which each of us will sign," said Jack after a moment's thought. "Then the other boys could add their names to it as fast as they joined us in the venture."

"I guess that will be better," nodded Lafe. "It certainly will look more business-like."

"You draw up the paper, Jack, and we'll sign it suggested Ned Skeen.

"All right, Ned. It won't take long."

In a quarter-hour the agreement had been carefully prepared and Jack Lightfoot was the first to put his name to it, quickly followed by each of the others.

"To-morrow is Saturday, a holiday," Jack then said. "In the morning we can get all of the other boys to sign their names and the afternoon shall be devoted to our first general search."

"Good enough, Jack."

"In the meantime I'll work up a plan on which the search can be conducted, at least making it systematic and I hope effective."

"I guess you forgot one thing to-night, Jack," said Lafe Lampton after the meeting had broken up and all the other boys had departed except Jack, Tom and Lafe.

"What was that?" inquired Jack with a look of surprise.

"About the nutting party," put in Tom.

"Ginger!" exclaimed Jack. "So I did."

"You know," added Lafe, "that we promised to take Kate Strawn, Nellie Conner and Daisy out to the woods for nuts this coming Saturday afternoon."

"Yes, I remember now."

"They'll feel deucedly disappointed if we fail them, for they've set their hearts on going," added Lafe. "Christmas will soon be here, you know, and we'll want a raft of nuts gathered before the holidays start in."

Jack Lightfoot thought a moment, then said in his hearty fashion:



"Well, well, we won't disappoint the girls, Lafe, let come what may."

"But you're not going to give up the searching party, are you?"

"By no means."

"Nor can you well leave us out of it."

"I don't intend doing so," laughed Jack, proceeding to explain. "The girls can go along with us. I'll organize the searching party in the morning, laying out all of the details, and get Brodie and Phil Kirtland to direct it."

"They'll do that all right."

"We three, however, accompanied by the girls, will drive out there in Mr. Gratton's big three-seater, which I'm sure he will loan me."

"That'll be great," nodded Tom.

"There are plenty of walnut trees and hickories all through the woods out in that section and we can easily combine the two undertakings, and so make good our promise to the girls."

"That will work all right," said Tom approvingly.

"To-morrow morning, then, we'll make all of the arrangements," added Jack, "so as to get a start immediately after noon."

"That's good enough," cried Lafe; "and enough for to-night. Now I'm off for home."

That the plan suggested by Jack Lightfoot met with general approval was evinced by the praise heard on all sides the following day and by the eagerness with which it was sanctioned by all of the high-school and academy boys who chiefly were to benefit by the success of the scheme. Before noon that day the names of all of the boys were affixed to the agreement and everybody was "rooting" that some one of them might discover the plunder said to have been hidden by Dillon and so obtain the promised reward.

### CHAPTER III.

#### THE NUTTING PARTY.

"It was awfully good of you under the circumstances, Jack, to think of us girls and not give up the nutting party we had planned."

This appreciative remark came from Kate Strawn early that Saturday afternoon as the party of six, including Jack, Tom and Lafe, with Nellie Conner, Daisy Lightfoot and Kate, were whirling over the upland road behind Gratton's big gray stepper.

It then was only half-past twelve and they were already well out of Cranford and far on their way.

Jack Lightfoot was on the front seat driving, with

Kate Strawn beside him, for whom he had a special liking.

Next came Lafe and Daisy Lightfoot and on the rear seat were Nellie Conner and Tom.

They were bowling along at a rattling clip and already the woods beyond the range of hills were looming up in view.

Ordinarily it was a little late for gathering nuts, but the season this year had been unusually backward and the prospect was good for plenty of fruit from the nut-bearing trees.

Jack laughed lightly at Kate's remark, yet was pleased with the grateful glance that accompanied it.

"I couldn't think of disappointing you," he replied. "Besides, I've planned to carry out both undertakings."

"I'm glad to feel that we have not seriously interfered with the searching party."

"You have not interfered with it at all, Kate."

"Oh, Jack is a great planner," cried Lafe, who had overheard their remarks. "He has got the entire work laid out."

"It's like this," explained Jack when Kate showed an inclination to know the particulars. "We started a good half-hour before the searching party, which is under the direction of Brodie and Phil Kirtland, and by riding out to the woods we shall get there nearly two hours before the other boys. That will give us ample time to gather nuts enough to fill all the bags we have brought with us."

"Are the others going to walk?" inquired Kate.

"Yes, when they are not running," laughed Jack.

"How many are there?"

"Between fifty and sixty this afternoon. If the search to-day proves unsuccessful, however, it will be resumed on Monday with a larger party."

"Where are they going to start in, Jack?" inquired Tom from the rear seat.

Jack pointed with his whip.

"Away off yonder, nearly a mile to the right, is where Dillon's house is located," said he. "You can't see it from here, for a part of the woods lie in the way. Between his house and Hickman's swamp, however, which lies away over yonder, we know that the stolen property is buried."

"I should think the ground would show signs of having been dug up," remarked Kate.

"So it would, perhaps, if the leaves had not fallen from the trees and very likely covered it. You see, Kate, it's quite late in the season and all of the trees except the evergreens are nearly bare."

"But where is the searching party going to start



in?" repeated Tom, who had not accompanied Jack and Lafe on the gunning expedition the previous week and so was not as well informed.

"They will start in about half a mile this side of Dillon's house and work through the woods between it and the swamp," explained Jack. "Prof. Sampson is sure that the silver is buried under a pine tree which he noticed at the time he saw the thieves at work, and the boys will search under every pine tree over the entire section."

"That will take considerable time."

"That's true enough, but the search must be thorough. I have directed Brodie to line the boys up in a way that will cover all of the ground and then work them east without missing a single pine tree."

"That ought to result in something."

"I hope it may," replied Jack, whipping up the horse. "Meantime we'll drive well into the woods beyond the point where the searching party starts in and try to strike the road which Lafe and I saw last week."

"It must be off to the right, Jack."

"Yes, I think so, and I'm going to take the first road in that direction. I saw a lot of walnut trees and a few hickories when we were trudging through the woods last week and I think I can pretty nearly locate them."

"We can keep our eyes open for pine trees, too," suggested Lafe.

"Yes," nodded Jack. "Also for the basket which Prof. Sampson dropped and which I left lying where we found it. If we could only discover that, Lafe, we could easily locate the desired pine tree."

"Mebbe we shall."

"I hope so, I'm sure," said Nellie Conner. "It would be just fine if our party could be the one to locate that stolen silver. Are you going to take this road, Jack?"

"Yes," replied Lightfoot. "I think it'll lead about to the place we wish to hit."

They had reached the beginning of the belt of woodland and the road mentioned bore sharply to the east and into the very depths of the woods.

"This looks like the one, Jack," cried Lafe. "It was very narrow, you remember."

"Yes, I think it is the one."

"I wish we could locate the point where we crossed it when striking over to Dillon's house."

"That is not easily done, Lafe, since we noted no landmark at the time," replied Jack. "I will drive

about what I think should be the right distance, however, and then we'll get out and look for some nuts."

"Ten minutes ought to cover it, Jack."

"Just about that, I should say."

Jack whipped up the horse again while speaking and for the interval mentioned drove briskly along the narrow road which steadily took them deeper into the woods. The main road quickly was lost to view, as well as the upland over which they had traveled, and soon they were surrounded with a solitude and silence like that of a primeval forest.

"Dear me!" murmured Daisy Lightfoot with a timid look stealing into her pretty eyes. "It seems awfully lonely here."

"Lonely!" exclaimed Kate, with a backward glance at her. "How can you feel lonely with five vivacious companions?"

"I mean only the place," laughed Daisy. "There is not a thing to be seen but sky and trees."

"Well, I see a rattling big clump of walnuts over yonder," cried Lafe, pointing off to the left of the road. "And there's no end of nuts on them still. I can see them from here."

"Slow up, Jack," cried Tom. "Lafe is right. I can see them, too."

Jack reined in the horse and gazed in the direction indicated.

The clump of trees was considerably removed from the road, but the fruit-laden branches which now were bare of leaves could be plainly seen.

"You are right," said he, "and there ought to be plenty of ripe nuts on the ground."

"Can't we leave the team here?" asked Kate.

"Yes, certainly," said Jack. "I'll hitch the horse to that sapling at the side of the road. In case we wander away all we need remember is the location of the road and the clump of walnut trees will serve us for a landmark."

"Oh, we'll not get lost," cried Lafe a bit derisively. "What do you take us for?"

"Pile out, then, and take the bags with you," said Jack. "I'll look after hitching the horse."

The girls needed no second bidding nor any assistance. They sprang down with as much agility as the boys, each carrying a burlap bag holding about a peck, and all except Jack and Kate Strawn started away through the bushes and underbrush toward the distant walnut trees.

"I am going to wait for Jack," Kate cried as the others departed. "I'm afraid he may be lonely or need help."



The others laughed as they hastened away, but Jack said warmly:

"I won't need any help, Kate, but I'm glad to have you wait for me."

"The pleasure is not all yours," laughed Kate, blushing.

"It'll take only a minute to hitch the horse," said Jack as he drew the animal off the road. "If the others find walnuts plenty, you and I will go in search of some hickory nuts."

"I'm agreeable."

"The hickories are not so thick about here, but I guess we can find some."

"We want both kinds."

"We'll get them."

"Are you all ready?"

"Yes," nodded Jack as he finished blanketing the horse. "Now we'll follow the others."

"They have already got to work," said Kate.

"So I see," Jack rejoined as he helped her through the underbrush. "Gracious! look at that. Lafe is letting out that right arm of his as if he was throwing the hammer in an athletic tournament."

"It's fairly raining walnuts," laughed Kate. "Let's hurry!"

Under one of the distant trees Lafe Lampton had stripped off his coat and was repeatedly hurling at the higher branches a huge piece of a dead bough which he had found on the ground, which feat had led to Jack Lightfoot's remarks.

With every cast of the dead bough, moreover, for Lafe was an unerring marksman with a bludgeon of this kind, he was bringing down upon the dry leaves strewing the ground a shower of nuts which the others with shouts of laughter were gathering into their bags.

"Gee! but there's a raft of them here," yelled Lafe, as Jack and Kate approached. "I told you so. I could see them from the road."

"Oh, this is great sport, Jack," put in Nellie, flushed with excitement.

Jack looked about for a moment in search of a hickory, but could discover none.

"Aren't you going to help us?" asked Daisy.

"It doesn't look to me as if you needed any help," laughed Jack. "You are finding plenty of walnuts here and we do not want more than enough to fill four of the big bags in the wagon."

"That's right, too," said Lafe, panting from his exertions.

"I'll tell you what I'll do," added Jack. "While you four are gathering these I'll take Kate along with me

and look for some hickories. I think there are some further above here."

"Over that way?"

"Yes."

"Shall we follow you later?"

"Yes, after filling your bags," replied Jack. "Put them in the wagon and look me up. It'll take a good deal longer to fill these two with hickory nuts."

"Don't go so far away that we'll lose you," cautioned Tom as Jack and Kate prepared to depart.

"I'll guard against that. In case you lose sight of us, whistle through your fingers and I can hear you. I'll keep near enough for that."

"I can whistle like a calliope," laughed Lafe. "Go ahead, Jack. We'll find you all right."

"I'll return the signal if I hear it and then you can locate me," said Jack. "A loud whistle can be heard a quarter-mile in the stillness of this wilderness."

Leaving the others to continue their work, Jack Lightfoot now set out with Kate through the woods, shaping a course which took them further up the road and parallel to it, and very soon they had passed out of sight of their companions.

Neither dreamed, however, of the startling adventure awaiting them, with its curious bearing upon after events.

---

## CHAPTER IV.

### A STARTLING ENCOUNTER.

As Jack Lightfoot had predicted, several hickory trees were found after a brief search, but nuts were not plentiful on them and some little time and labor were required to gather a couple of quarts, which Jack bagged and slung over his shoulder.

"I think we'll find more of them still further that way," said he finally. "We'll go over beyond those oaks and pines, Kate, at all events, and see what we can discover."

"Aren't we getting pretty deep in the woods?" asked Kate with a backward glance.

"Not very."

"It seems so to me."

"The road lies over yonder. You can just see it through the trees."

"And our team?"

"That is about an eighth of a mile back that way," said Jack. "We'll return by the road after filling our bags."

Though he detected nothing familiar about this location, there being a very general likeness in all



such wooded sections, Jack was within fifty yards of the place where he and Lafe had a week before seen the basket dropped by Prof. Sampson. With no thought of it just then, however, he helped Kate through some brushwood and around a clump of scrubby oaks, then headed still further to the east.

"I suppose the searching party has begun work by this time, Jack, don't you?" asked Kate as they threaded their way among the trees.

"Yes, probably," he replied. "They should have arrived nearly an hour ago at the point where they were to begin."

"How far is that from here?"

"About half a mile."

"Are they to work this way?"

"Gradually," said Jack. "I doubt if they get as far as here to-day, however, as there's a good deal of ground to be covered and it takes time to make a thorough search."

"I do hope they'll find the stolen property. Or better still, Jack, I wish that we might be lucky enough to discover the place where it's buried," Kate vivaciously added with a lively glance at him.

"Possibly we will," laughed Jack. "You may prove to be a mascot, and we might suddenly stumble upon the very spot where the plunder is hidden."

"Indeed, I hope so! And if we do—— Oh, Jack!"

Kate Strawn's words abruptly had ended with a startled scream, half-suppressed, yet thrilled with swift alarm.

It was occasioned by the sudden appearance of a man, evidently a tramp, who had swaggered from behind a clump of shrubbery scarce six feet away.

In looks he was as tough a ticket as one often meets.

His coarse garments were soiled and torn, his shoes gaping at the toes and his slouch felt hat was tattered and full of holes, much as if it had served for a gunner's target.

His rough hands and dark face were begrimed with dirt. A matted beard covered his lower features, while a shock of black hair and a pair of beetling brows added repulsiveness to his grim countenance.

He must have overheard what Jack and Kate were saying as they approached, for there was an ugly look in his eyes as he fixed them upon Jack, and he at once demanded with a threatening growl:

"What yer looking fer around here, sonny?"

Jack Lightfoot's face flushed hotly, then began to grow pale.

It was not with fear, however, far from it. For

despite the fact that the tramp was a man rather over the ordinary size, Jack was himself a well-built and muscular athlete and he had perfect confidence in his knowledge of the science of self-defense.

Instead of fear it was a feeling of indignation that sent the color from Jack's cheeks. He did not like the looks of this fellow nor the insolent way with which he had spoken.

More than this, too, he did not fancy being thus addressed in the hearing of Kate Strawn and he did not like the idea of her having been frightened by such a fellow.

Yet he answered politely enough, though a little sternly:

"I am looking for some hickory nuts."

"Well, go look somewhere else, not around here," snarled the man, drawing a little nearer to Jack.

Lightfoot's bright eyes, which were steadily fixed on the ruffian's face, began to burn and glow ominously.

"Why do you say that to me?" he sharply demanded.

"'Cause I mean what I say," cried the fellow with a threatening gesture. "Go somewhere else, d'ye hear? Light out, the two o' yer!"

"Not much, mister."

"Dust afore I make you dust or you'll wish yer had."

"These woods are free to all and we have a right to be here," Jack now cried a bit angrily. "I shall go where I wish or stay here as long as I please."

"Oh, yer will, eh?"

"That's just what I'll do."

The face of the ruffian had grown darker and more threatening and he now thrust into the pocket of his shabby coat a crumpled sheet of paper which he had been holding in one of his begrimed hands.

Kate Strawn, though not so much alarmed, now took advantage of a momentary silence between the two and said quietly to her companion:

"Let's go, Jack. Don't have any further words with this ruffian."

"Ruffian, eh?"

"Not much, Kate," Jack said quickly. "I don't propose to be driven away in this fashion nor will I put up with any more of this man's insolence."

Naturally he turned a little in her direction when he addressed her and for a moment his eyes were diverted from the scowling ruffian opposite.

The latter instantly took advantage of the opportunity, for Jack in thus leaving himself open to an



attack did not really think the scoundrel would strike him.

With a quick bound, however, the tramp suddenly let out with his right hand and dealt a swinging blow at Jack's head.

Jack attempted to duck it, seeing it coming, but the assault was so quick and unexpected that he only partly succeeded.

The ruffian's fist caught Jack on the side of the head, making him see stars for a moment and nearly sending him to the ground.

As he reeled backward, considerably dazed by the cowardly blow, the ruffian sprang forward as if to repeat the assault.

This brought another scream from the startled girl near-by, not a scream of fear, but one of rising anger and indignation.

It was lucky for Jack that Kate Strawn inherited some of the spunk shown by her Puritan ancestors at Lexington and Bunker Hill.

A moment before she had caught sight of a piece of a dead branch lying on the ground nearly at her feet, a piece almost the size and shape of a baseball bat.

Now she stooped quickly and seized it from the ground.

Then, with the bludgeon raised, with her lithe, shapely figure drawn erect, she darted between Jack and the tramp, crying in tones that rang with fearless indignation:

"You stand back! If you strike him again, you coward, I'll fell you to the ground!"

The ruffian recoiled with a snarl of mingled amazement and alarm, for the weapon was an ugly one even in the hands of a girl, and before he could recover from his astonishment Jack Lightfoot had entirely thrown off the effects of the miscreant's blow.

It let loose in him, however, that spirit of righteous resentment which such an affront fully warrants. Ordinarily he would not have entered into a fight in the presence of a girl, but now the case seemed to admit of no alternative.

Without a word, but with a fiery flash of his dark eyes, Jack sprang forward, gliding swiftly under the uplifted club in Kate's hand, and before the tramp fairly knew what had befallen him he was sent reeling backward by a stinging blow from Jack's hard-clenched fist.

"Stand aside, Kate!" he shouted quickly. "I'll attend to this fellow."

Kate Strawn immediately drew back a few paces,

dreading the result of the unavoidable affray, yet feeling that she must not again interfere.

The tramp with an ugly growl had leaped to his feet again and now came plunging at Jack with hands clenched and eyes blazing with anger.

"Darn yer picture, I'll grind yer to atoms fer that!" he growled furiously.

Jack said not a word.

With a shifty side-step as the ruffian came lunging at him he let the fellow pass him a trifle and then dealt him a lightning-like blow under the ear.

It was a stinging one, delivered with all his strength and straight from the shoulder, and the tramp went sideways to the ground as if struck by a battering-ram.

"Now you get up and go about your business, if you have any, or you'll get more of the same sort," Jack sternly cried, too manly to repeat the blow while the ruffian was down.

The tramp's only answer was an infuriated oath.

He seemed suddenly to realize that he had underestimated the strength and pugilistic skill of his opponent and that he had much better resort to a different method of fighting.

Instead of leaping up as he had done before he now turned quickly on the ground and succeeded in seizing one of Jack's legs, then scrambled quickly to his feet.

It had not been Jack's intention to let the ruffian thus close with him, knowing well that the rascal had much advantage in weight, but the move had been so suddenly made that Jack was again caught a little unprepared and in another moment the two were engaged in a fierce hand-to-hand struggle.

In rising the ruffian had succeeded in twining both his arms around Jack's waist, pinning both of the latter's arms to his sides, and he now proceeded to crush Jack in a bearlike hug, bending him backward until he nearly lost his footing.

"Darn yer! I'll show yer now what kind o' wood they make shingles out of!" he snarled with his breath hot on Jack's cheek.

Jack dug his feet into the damp ground, straining every muscle to prevent being thrown, but he made no reply.

Then, over the ruffian's shoulder, he saw Kate Strawn suddenly start from her position and spring toward them with the club again raised in her girlish hands.

"You let him go!" she shouted almost in the tramp's ear. "You let him go or I'll strike you!"



The tramp uttered a fierce snarl and sprang to one side, swinging Jack between himself and the girl, yet not for a moment did he relax his bearlike grip.

Nor did Jack Lightfoot for a moment have any fears as to the final ending of the struggle. Not only was he a powerful wrestler, but also familiar with every turn and trick of the art, and he was now deferring any aggressive move only to get the measure of his opponent and let him wind himself by his strenuous efforts.

"Keep away, Kate," he quickly shouted upon seeing her approach. "You leave this fellow to me."

"But——"

"Do what I tell you. I'm in no danger."

"Like thunder you ain't!" snarled the ruffian as Kate Strawn again drew back at Jack's bidding.

"It's not in you to harm me," the latter muttered.

"You wait and see, darn yer!"

Being much the heavier of the two and some the stronger, the ruffian had anticipated an easy victory when he got Jack so securely around the body.

But what the man excelled in weight and strength Jack Lightfoot more than offset in agility and cleverness, and to the intense rage and chagrin of the tramp the result became more and more doubtful.

Try as he would he could not get the wiry boy off his feet and for several minutes they swayed to and fro, this way and that, each reserving an extra pound of strength with which to seize upon the first available chance to down the other.

Jack was thoroughly self-possessed and as cool as a cucumber.

The tramp, on the other hand, was much enraged and excited and was beginning to puff and blow like a pair of wheezy bellows, all of which Jack Lightfoot coolly noticed.

At length, feeling that his wind was leaving him and beginning to fear the result of the terrific conflict, the ruffian threw all the strength he possessed into one desperate effort and succeeded in raising Jack clear off the ground, then hurled him earthward with all his energy.

A cry of disappointment and alarm broke from Kate, who was watching with white cheeks and dilated eyes the bitter combat.

Then the unexpected happened.

This move by the tramp was the very one for which Jack Lightfoot had been waiting.

To Kate's intense surprise and relief Jack turned while fairly in the air and landed catlike squarely upon his feet. Then, before the ruffian could realize

how it was done, Jack cross-hipped him, tossed his heels high above his head, then hurled him bodily to the ground, upon which he landed with a resounding thud and for a moment lay half-senseless and exhausted.

Before the ruffian could rise, moreover, a shrill whistle sounded through the woods but a short distance away, followed by several ringing shouts.

"Hurrah!"

"Good work, Jack! Well done, old man!"

Both Jack and Kate turned involuntarily in the direction of the cries.

Tom Lightfoot and Lafe Lampton, closely followed by their girl companions, were plunging through the brushwood and bushes toward the scene of the conflict.

The tramp on the ground also saw and heard them and he evidently felt that he had better make himself scarce.

Without a word he sprang up, flashed one revengeful look at Jack, then darted around the clump of shrubbery from which he had appeared and went dashing away through the woods.

Jack Lightfoot's first impulse was to follow him and give him a good thrashing, which he truly deserved. Upon turning, however, Jack caught sight of something white lying on the ground and he stooped and picked it up, letting the man go.

It was the crumpled sheet of paper which the tramp had thrust into his pocket and which had fallen from it when Jack Lightfoot threw him violently to the ground.

## CHAPTER V.

### THE TRAMP'S LETTER.

"What the dickens was the trouble, Jack?" Lafe Lampton excitedly asked as he came hurrying nearer with his companions.

Jack waited until they had all joined him, then he complacently informed them.

"It didn't amount to very much, boys," he added, "but I want to thank you, Kate, for the courage you displayed. You're a brave girl and I'm really very proud of you."

No longer feeling any alarm, Kate now fell to blushing furiously at Jack's warm expressions of approval and for a moment she could not speak while he shook her heartily by the hand.

"Oh, it was nothing at all, Jack," she finally replied with a nervous little laugh. "I was so afraid



you might be hurt that I did the only thing I could do. In fact, Jack, I hardly knew what I did."

"It was very courageous, Kate, all the same," replied Lightfoot. "And I won't soon forget it, I promise you."

Then he told the boys what the girl had done, and one and all echoed his words of praise, which only set Kate blushing more than ever.

"Do you know who the fellow is, Jack?" Lafe presently inquired.

"He appeared to be a tramp."

"Ever seen him before?"

"Not that I remember," said Jack. "How did you happen to show up so suddenly?"

"We came looking for you," explained Tom. "We'd filled our bags and put them in the wagon, then hastened to come and help you. Just as we drew near we saw you down the fellow."

"Gee! but 'twas an awful toss," put in Lafe, laughing. "I'll bet some of his bones are aching after it. It'll teach him not to buck up against a Cranford athlete."

"What is that paper, Jack?" Kate now inquired, observing the crumpled sheet which he still had in his hand.

"It fell out of the tramp's pocket when I threw him to the ground."

"See what is written on it," cried Tom. "It may reveal the rascal's identity."

"Possibly," said Jack. "We'll examine it and see, though I don't much care who he is."

Nevertheless, he smoothed the crumpled sheet of paper, while the others drew about him to read it.

The letter, for such it appeared to be, was quite plainly written with a lead pencil, and read as follows:

"DEAR TONY: I was glad to get your letter and to know that you finally have made a change and removed to a new shop. You now can do much better work, and the chief article stipulated in the contract may not prove to be so objectionable as we for some time have feared.

"Now that you are better settled, get down to hard work right away. I think you can, with Gibson to help you, do the job finely. He is a white man from his toes up, and always the true metal.

"From what you write me, Tony, big results should follow.

"Joe Rock and Tapley, if they are near this section of the country, might aid you in the work. If they still are on the road, and not due to arrive here soon, I think you had better wire up north to them. They expected to be away about ninety days, but on such occasions time moves with a snail's paces.

"Why not try to reach them with a telegram, then, and bring both of them down here? I think that is the best move you could make.

"You certainly cannot lose by so doing, as you already may have decided. No more this time. From your friend,  
JIM."

Such was the tramp's letter which Jack Lightfoot read aloud to his companions.

"Huh!" grunted Lafe, with a look of disgust. "I don't see much of anything in that."

"Nor I," said Tom.

"It doesn't even tell the name of the tramp nor that of the man who wrote the letter," put in Kate Strawn, peering at it over Jack's shoulder.

"Only their given names," replied Jack. "Evidently the tramp's name is Tony."

"Providing the letter was written to him," suggested Tom.

"That seems probable, Tom, since he was in possession of it."

"Possibly he may have found it."

"In which case he would not have been very likely to keep it," reasoned Jack. "For there appears to be nothing in it of special interest to a stranger."

"That's right, too," said Lafe.

"Furthermore," added Jack, "the tramp had it in his hand when I first saw him and evidently he had been reading it out here in the woods. That indicates that the letter was of some interest to him, and therefore it probably belonged to him."

"There is no getting around that argument," laughed Lafe. "The tramp's name is Tony all right."

"What are you going to do with it, Jack?" asked Kate.

Jack Lightfoot had folded the letter and was slipping it into his pocket.

"I'll keep it a day or two in case I happen to run across the scamp again," said he.

"Huh!" ejaculated Lafe. "He don't look to me as if he knew about anything of value. I doubt if the letter was ever written to him after all."

"Why so, Lafe?" laughed Jack. "You appear to have suddenly changed your mind."

"Only because the letter speaks of getting down to hard work, and tramps of that fellow's cloth never do any work at all. He's one of the Weary Willie boys all right, that's plain enough."

"Well, there may be something in that," smiled Jack, a bit amused by Lafe's remarks. "I'll keep the letter for a few days, however, and hand it to the scamp if I chance to meet him."



"You'd better hand him a few good stiff ones in the neck," growled Lafe significantly. "Then he'd get more nearly what he deserves."

Jack Lightfoot made no reply to this, for Tom startled all by suddenly exclaiming:

"Gracious! I think I felt a drop of rain."

Instinctively every pair of eyes was turned toward the sky.

Unobserved by any of them, while in the depths of the woods and during the recent excitement, the heavens had become overcast with dark clouds, which were chasing up from the west in threatening volume.

"It does look like rain, Tom, for a fact," cried Jack quite gravely. "This is a sudden change of weather, girls, and I guess we'd better make quick tracks for home."

"And give up getting the hickory nuts?" asked Nellie, with some disappointment.

"We'll have to make a bid for them another day."

"I think we'd better return, Jack, if it's going to storm," advised Kate. "We'll get drenched if it comes on to rain hard."

"That's right," said Jack decidedly. "We'll strike for the road at once and make a bee-line for our team."

"Rain will break up the searching party, too," grumbled Lafe, as they hurriedly picked their way toward the narrow road.

"It can be tried again next week," replied Jack encouragingly. "Our agreement with the boys will hold, and perhaps we'll accomplish something."

It took the little party but a short time to reach the road along which they now hastened in the direction of the vehicle.

But few remarks were made during the hurried walk, chiefly when Kate Strawn caught sight of a huge boulder half-hidden amid bushes and small cedars.

"Dear me, that's a big rock to be so near the road," she said to Jack, with whom she was walking.

"Yes, so it is," he replied, with an indifferent glance at it. "But it is much too large to be removed without blasting."

He recalled a little later this seemingly trivial incident and was led to wonder if there was not, after all, something really worthy of consideration in what is known as luck.

Before they could reach the waiting vehicle, which was found where Jack had left it, the drops of rain were falling more rapidly and the approach of a storm could not be doubted.

All hands piled quickly into the wagon, however, the girls nestling into their wraps, and a half-minute

later Jack had Gratton's stepper cutting out a rattling pace for home.

As Lafe Lampton had predicted the storm put an end to the work of the searching party for that day, since nothing could be done to advantage in the wet woods, and they passed the Cranford boys half a mile out on the upland over which they were scurrying toward home.

Yet the work of that day had not by any means ended in failure, as will presently appear.

For Jack Lightfoot had made one of the lucky plays of his life.

---

## CHAPTER VI.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT'S SUSPICIONS.

After eating his supper that Saturday evening Jack Lightfoot decided to walk down to the Cranford House, the largest hotel in town, and see what news he could gather bearing upon the approaching trial of the two men then in jail charged with the recent robberies.

Very few persons had any doubt about the guilt of these two men, Dillon and Wagstaff, yet nearly everybody admitted that it might not be easy to convict them upon the evidence thus far secured, since they had retained one of the shrewdest lawyers in town and one who would fight the case to the limit.

Jack Lightfoot had a good many ideas of his own bearing upon the various features of the case, yet he had said but little about them.

He knew that the buried silver stolen from Dillworthy's house must be located in order to clinch the case; and this fact, together with the generous reward offered for discovering the property, had led Jack to organize the big searching party which since had become the talk of the town.

After giving it further thought, moreover, it struck Jack as being very strange that a tramp should have been prowling through the woods in a locality which, as Jack well knew, must be somewhere near the secret burial place of the loot.

The more he thought about it the more Jack wondered whether the tramp had been out there searching for the booty and whether he might not have known more about it than appeared upon the surface.

The fact that the tramp had been so determined in his attempt to drive Jack away from the locality where the two had met began to arouse vague suspicions in the mind of the latter.



It was these misgivings that sent Jack down to the hotel that evening to see what more he could learn.

Instead of immediately entering the hotel, however, he walked out to the stable at the rear of the house and had a short talk with the head hostler, Jerry Splain, with whom he was well acquainted.

The latter was a shrewd, warm-hearted Irishman, with a brogue as rich as a Klondike claim, and a fondness for Jack that knew no bounds.

Jack found the hostler seated on an empty box in the broad open doorway of the stable, and the only other person present was a stocky, smooth-faced man in a plaid suit, who was a stranger to Jack.

The man was perched on a grain chest at one side of the stable floor, and he evidently had been talking with the hostler. He had a sporty look, which did not impress Jack Lightfoot very favorably, nor the searching glance of the dark eyes under his woolen cap.

Jack paid no attention to him, however, but lowered his umbrella as he sauntered into the stable, saying genially:

"Good-evening, Jerry."

"Och, bedad, is it you, Jack?" cried Splain, as the light of the stable lantern fell upon Jack's face.

"Most of me, Jerry," laughed Lightfoot, shaking the glistening drops from his umbrella.

"Sure, it's good for sore eyes, the sight of ye," cried the hostler. "Phat's after bringing ye out on a rainy night the loike of this?"

"I wanted a whiff of fresh air."

"And ye're not afeared o' rain, eh?"

"Not much, Jerry."

"I'll bate ye're not," laughed Splain. "Faith, it's a broth of a bye ye are, and thot's no lie."

Jack laughed and leaned indifferently near one of the open stalls.

"Well, Jerry, it's not much of a night for homeless persons, vagabonds, tramps and the like," said he.

"Bedad, thot's right, too, Jack."

"I suppose you are more or less bothered with tramps about here, Jerry, aren't you?"

"Waal, summut," nodded the hostler.

"I imagine they try to steal a march on you now and then, looking for some snug corner in which to sleep."

"Bad cess to thim, yis! But it's divil a march they stale on me very often, the lazy spalpeens. Sure I have me peepers open for thim night and day, so I have."

"I guess that's right, Jerry," laughed Jack.

"Bedad, ye can wager a good bit on thot, lad. If

there be wan thing I don't loike in this wurruld, thot wan thing is a vermin-infisted thramp. I've no use for thim, niver a use, lad."

"Have you seen any about here lately, Jerry?"

"Not for some days, Jack."

"Nor when out on the road?"

"Divil a bit, lad. Why d'ye ask?"

"Because I encountered one when up in the woods to-day."

"Is thot so?"

"I had quite a tussle with the fellow, Jerry, and didn't quite fancy his looks," Jack carelessly added. "I thought I'd ask if you'd seen him about here."

"Phat kind of a looking dog was he after being?" inquired Splain, with increased interest.

"Quite a good-sized man, with a black beard and a dirty brown suit," replied Jack. "He was out in the woods this side of Hickman's swamp, and I wondered what he was doing in that out-of-the-way locality."

"Begorra!" cried Jerry, with a start. "Mebbe he was after looking for thot buried silver, the divil saize him."

"That is what I suspected," nodded Jack.

"It strikes me, young fellow, that you are displaying a good deal of interest in a worthless man of that stamp."

The interruption now came from the man seated on the grain chest. For some little time he had been fur- tively watching Jack from under the vizor of his cap, and there was a light in his eyes that would have pleased the latter even less, had he happened to observe it. The man spoke with a half-subdued growl, how- ever, which led Jack to turn quickly in his direction.

"What's that, sir?" he asked, a bit shortly.

"I said, young fellow, that you were displaying a good deal of interest in a worthless tramp."

"That seems to surprise you, mister."

"Murdock, my name is."

"Or possibly it offends you, Mr. Murdock," added Jack, laughing lightly.

The man's brows drew a little closer over his dark eyes, gathering to half a frown, yet he answered agree- ably enough:

"No, not in the least. Why should it offend me?"

"I wondered why, in case it was so," said Jack, a bit pointedly.

"And I merely wondered why a boy of your evident intelligence should have any interest in a tramp whom you happened to cross in the woods," returned Mur- dock, with his steady gaze fixed upon Jack's face.

"Bedad, this bye has an interest in iverything he



sees, thot's phat he has," Jerry Splain now put in with a laugh. "It's divil a thing thot gits by him, sor, ye can be after taking me worrud fer thot."

"Oh, I merely wondered who the tramp was, Jerry, and whether he had been seen here in town," Jack now explained, with an air of indifference.

It did not appear to quite satisfy Murdock, however, for he persisted in sticking to the subject. Still fur-tively watching Jack, he growled inquisitively:

"Was there any out about the tramp that you are so curious, young fellow?"

"My name, sir, is Lightfoot," said Jack, drawing himself up and speaking a bit proudly.

"Ah! excuse me," grinned Murdock, displaying a double row of sharp white teeth. "If I'm not mistaken you're the young man who organized that searching party, which is so hot to find a lot of stolen property that is said to have been buried somewhere."

"Thot's who he is, bedad," cried Jerry. "And sure, sor, if I was out for a bet aither way I'd be after putting down me dough that they land the stuff."

"I hope so, I'm sure," drawled Murdock, still with a grin on his swarthy face. "But you haven't answered my question, Mr. Lightfoot."

"What was it?" inquired Jack, now beginning to feel a little suspicious of his persistent questioner.

"Was there any out about the tramp that you took so much interest in him?"

"Not that I particularly noticed."

"He was just like any other tramp, wasn't he?"

"Yes, only more so," smiled Jack.

Murdock laughed now and drew out a cigar from his pocket.

"Had a tussle with him, did you say?" he inquired carelessly.

Jack decided that the stranger was becoming much too inquisitive and that he would enlighten him no further.

"Oh, it was nothing of consequence," said he indifferently.

"No blood shed, eh?"

"None whatever, sir."

"Begorra!" cried Jerry, with a loud laugh. "If there was after being any blood shed, I'll bate it was the thramp's blood, niver a drap o' Jack Lightfoot's. The laddy buck of a thramp doesn't live who could land his dukes on a Jack Lightfoot."

Murdock paid no attention to the interruption. Throwing away the match with which he had lighted his cigar, he now stared straight at Jack and said with some bluntness:

"I suppose you would recognize the fellow if you should meet him again, Mr. Lightfoot, wouldn't you?"

Jack did not fancy the tone of the question. He drew toward the stable door, intending to go, then turned back and said quietly:

"Why do you suppose so, Mr. Murdock?"

The man started slightly and his brows drooped again.

"Why?" he echoed with a growl. "Merely because you are so curious as to who the fellow may be. There's nothing extraordinary in my question, is there?"

"Possibly not," said Jack smiling oddly. "I notice only one thing that strikes me a little extraordinary."

"What is that?"

"Your own curiosity, Mr. Murdock. Since I am a total stranger to you I fail to see the occasion for such an interest as you have displayed in the opinions I may have formed."

"Oh, I've got no interest in them, nor in you," cried Murdock quickly.

"I'll take your word for that, sir," laughed Jack. "Good-night, Jerry."

And before either of the two men could reply Jack Lightfoot raised his umbrella and vanished into the darkness outside of the stable door.

## CHAPTER VII.

### JACK LIGHTFOOT'S RUSE.

After leaving the hotel stable, where he had received no very favorable impressions of the stranger named Murdock, Jack Lightfoot proceeded into the house itself and entered the large general office.

Not only was it the fall of the year when travel was heavy and the house unusually well patronized, but the stormy night had also a tendency to keep most of the guests indoors, and Jack found that the office and reading-room, as well as the handsome billiard parlor, were thronged with people.

At first seeing none whom he recognized Jack spent a few minutes over one of the papers in the reading-room, then sauntered out to the clerk's enclosure in the main office to look at the hotel register. He thought he would see if the name of any acquaintance was entered upon it.

The clerk then on duty was one Mr. Henley, who knew Jack very well and who nodded agreeably when he approached.

"How are you, Lightfoot?" said he.



"Good-evening, Mr. Henley," smiled Jack, lingering near the counter.

"What brings you here to-night?"

"I merely dropped in for a few minutes. I am going home presently."

"Anything new?"

"Nothing special, sir."

"I hear that you and the other boys are out for that five hundred."

"Well, yes, in a way, sir."

"I hope you will get it," said Henley heartily. "You boys deserve it."

"Thank you," said Jack. "We'll make a try for it. Of course we could put the money to good use, sir, yet our chief object is to recover Mr. Dillworthy's property for him."

"I trust you may succeed," was the reply, with a nod of approval.

Then the clerk turned aside to serve a gentleman at the cigar-case.

Jack moved along the counter and glanced at the open register, then began reading the names of the hotel guests written upon it.

He found none with which he was familiar on that day's page, then turned back to the entries of the preceding day.

On this page the result was the same, and he turned another leaf and then a fourth.

Here, registered four days before, he struck the name of a drummer whom he knew, a salesman of sporting goods, who visited one of the merchants in town.

Just below it, however, registered the same day, was another name, one that gave Jack a momentary thrill of surprise which quickly turned to absorbing interest.

Written in a coarse, irregular hand, this entry on the register read:

"Antony Murdock. New York City."

"This must be the man I met in the stable," thought Jack.

Then he suddenly caught his breath, dropping the leaves of the register, and exclaimed to himself in an excitement he quickly strove to govern:

"Antony—the short for that name is Tony! By gracious, can it be that that tramp, Tony, and the man I saw in the stable, are one and the same?"

For several minutes he could not believe it possible.

He then recalled Murdock's interest, his numerous questions, and the fact that the two men were about the same size and build.

"By ginger! it might be so," he said to himself. "That tramp may have been Murdock, rigged up in disguise. If so, he must have been up to some funny business, and is here in Cranford for no good purpose. I must keep cool and not go too fast, yet I'm bound to look into this a little deeper."

Now with definite suspicions of Murdock, Jack moved away from the register lest he should be observed and suspected by the man.

A few moments later, however, somewhat to his satisfaction, he saw Murdock enter the hotel, evidently having just come from the stable.

"He can't have seen me examine the register," thought Jack, with a side glance at him. "Yet he now appears to be constantly watching me. If he really is doing so and has followed me from the stable he must have some secret design in mind."

For some moments Jack could think of no motive back of this stealthy watchfulness on Murdock's part. Presently, however, he remembered the tramp's letter.

"By gracious!" he said to himself. "If I'm right in thinking he was the tramp he may suspect that I found his letter, and possibly he now is looking for a chance to steal it from my pocket. I can think of no other reason for his watching me and following me about so. I'll soon see whether I'm right in my suspicion. I'll resort to a little strategy."

Written on a loose sheet of paper in his overcoat pocket, Jack had a golf score which he had made the previous day. Pretending all the while not to notice Murdock, he now sauntered into the reading-room and took a chair, and for some minutes appeared to be interested in reading the golf score, which he had drawn from his pocket. He reasoned that, if observed by Murdock the latter would think he was reading the lost letter.

Presently, out of the corner of his eye, he saw Murdock approach the door and look in at him.

Evidently the man thought Jack did not see him, for he quickly stepped into the room and presently glided to a chair back of the one in which Jack was seated at the large center table.

Jack Lightfoot saw him all right, however, and after



a few moments he folded the sheet of paper on which the golf score was written and slipped it into the outside pocket of his overcoat.

Then he took up a newspaper from the table and began reading that. Hardly a minute had passed, however; when he heard Murdock move from his seat and come back of his chair, over which he leaned and said, in joking fashion:

"Are you looking in the newspaper for some account of that tramp, Mr. Lightfoot?"

Jack glanced up over his shoulder and laughed.

"No, not exactly, Mr. Murdock," he replied good-naturedly. "I'm only reading the news."

"Not much in the papers, is there?"

"No, very little of interest."

Murdock laughed, patted Jack on the shoulder, and then turned and walked away.

Jack pretended he did not observe it, but he had felt Murdock's hand glide into the pocket of the overcoat, and he knew that the sheet of paper was gone.

Yet he kept on reading for a spell, then walked out again to the clerk's desk.

Murdock had disappeared.

Turning again to the clerk, Jack now said quietly:

"I would like to ask you a few questions, Mr. Henley, if you kindly will answer them and not mention the fact that I have spoken to you in this way."

Henley leaned over the counter and nodded.

"Certainly, Jack," said he smiling. "What do you wish to know?"

"Who is the man registered here as Antony Murdock?" whispered Jack, making sure that he was not again being watched.

"He comes from New York," said Henley quietly.

"Do you know anything about him?"

"Not a thing, Jack. He came here some days ago and appears to be all right."

"Is this his first visit to Cranford?"

"I think so. I do not remember having seen him before."

"I guess that's all, Mr. Henley, thank you," bowed Jack. "I hope you'll say nothing about my having asked these questions."

"Not a word, Jack, I promise you," replied Henley, not a little puzzled as to the occasion for the inquiries.

He could not imagine any reason for Jack's interest in this stranger in Cranford.

Jack Lightfoot, also, was considerably puzzled at this time, but the truth dawned upon him a little later.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JACK'S CLEVER REASONING.

Jack did not remain long at the Cranford House after talking with Mr. Henley.

It then was nearly eight o'clock and he decided to return home and spend a little time in thinking over what had happened.

The whole business struck him as being very peculiar.

He could not understand why Murdock should have had any interest in him, nor why he had been prowling through the woods so far from Cranford in the disguise of a tramp, providing he was indeed the man met there that afternoon.

Jack began to have some doubts, in fact, whether Murdock was the tramp after all, and to feel that his suspicions might be groundless.

On the other hand, however, there was the incident of the letter, which certainly pointed to something deep under the surface, or why should Murdock have deliberately taken the chances of picking Jack's pocket?

Such was the drift of Jack's thoughts as he prepared to return home.

After looking into several of the rooms and seeing no further sign of the man, Jack left the hotel and reached the street.

It had now stopped raining, but the heavens were still heavily clouded and a gray mist hung in the air. Only the street lamps and the glare from the shop windows, most of the stores being open on Saturday evening, relieved the darkness of the night.

Hardly had Jack reached the sidewalk, however, when his sharp eyes detected something more, which again gave him a momentary start and increased his suspicions.

From out of the gloom of a narrow driveway leading toward the stable, and which ran parallel to one



side of the hotel, the figure of a man suddenly darted, crossing the street with a quick, catlike tread, and almost immediately vanishing into an opposite alley.

Owing to the darkness and the speed with which the man had moved, Jack had obtained only a fleeting glimpse at him, by no means sufficient to enable him to plainly recognize the figure.

Yet he paused for a moment, almost involuntarily, and gazed in the direction of the alley.

"I'm blessed if I don't think that was Murdock," he said to himself, wondering what this new move could mean.

"Has he stolen out of the hotel with a design to follow and watch me? If so, by gracious, he may crack me on the head before I know it. I'll keep my eyes open."

Jack's next impulse was to dash across the street and into the alley, to make sure whether he was right. After a moment's hesitation, however, he decided to go on about his own business, pretending that he had no serious distrust of the fellow.

He resolved to keep a sharp watch for him, nevertheless, and insure his own personal safety.

He had walked only about a block on his way home, however, when he met Lafe Lampton just coming out of one of the stores.

"Hello!" he exclaimed, quickly stopping him. "Where are you bound, Lafe?"

"Oh, is it you, Jack?" laughed Lafe, drawing nearer. "I'm out on an errand and was just going home."

"Are you in any special hurry?"

"Sure not. Why?"

"I'm glad I met you," said Jack. "Come along with me."

"Where to?"

"As far as my house, Lafe."

Lafe looked a little puzzled, for Jack had spoken softly and had an air of mystery for which the other could not account. Yet he readily walked along with him, and Jack presently added:

"I have something to tell you, Lafe."

"About what?"

"You shall know a little later."

"Say!" growled Lafe impulsively. "It strikes me

you're mighty long-winded in coming to the point, Jack. And what are you glancing back after? You act as nervous as a cat——"

"Hush!" cautioned Jack, significantly gripping his companion's arm. "I am not nervous, Lafe, only cautious."

"What's that for?"

"I suspect that I am being followed."

"Followed?"

"Easy! Don't look around!" whispered Jack hurriedly. "In case I'm right, Lafe, I don't want the party to know I've discovered him."

"Is it a man?" muttered Lafe, now thrilled with a very lively interest.

"Yes, a fellow named Murdock," said Jack. "Wait till we reach my home and I'll tell you all about it."

"We can go into the shed room," suggested Lafe, scarce able to contain his impatient curiosity. "Gee! but you've set me on my nerve, now!"

Jack made no reply to this, nor could he, though he several times made the attempt, discover any further sign of the man whom he had seen cross the street from the hotel, yet who he felt comparatively sure was Antony Murdock.

"If he is still after me, Lafe, he's keeping well out of sight," he quietly remarked, as he neared home.

"Let's lay for him," suggested Lafe pugnaciously. "If he means to do you any harm, Jack, we'll knock his block off."

"No, no, that won't do," cautioned Jack. "You'll presently understand why. Come into the house with me."

"Why not go out to the shed room?"

"I won't risk being spied on and possibly overheard," replied Jack, as they entered the yard. "We'll go up to my room and there I'll tell you all about it."

Though greatly puzzled Lafe offered no objection to this suggestion, but accompanied Jack into the house and up to his chamber.

There they sat down, Jack having lighted a lamp, and he then told Lafe what had led him to go to the hotel that evening, and all that had occurred after his arrival there.

Lafe's eyes were sticking out big and round before



Jack had fairly concluded his story, and he now began to see, indeed, what had occasioned the latter's caution.

"Gee! but this is strange, Jack, for a fact," said he, both mystified and suspicious. "What do you make of it?"

"I'm not sure yet."

"I don't wonder."

"I thought I'd let you into it with me, two heads being better than one, but I think we'd better keep our secret till we can learn what it means."

"Sure thing!"

"Possibly we may be all wrong, you know, and might make a laughing-stock of ourselves by disclosing our suspicions before dead sure we are right."

"There's no getting around that," nodded Lafe approvingly. "We'll not say a word to anybody till we know just how the cat will jump."

"That's my idea."

"You say this Murdock's front name is Antony," added Lafe. "The short of that is Tony all right, and he might have been that tramp, just as you suspect."

"He's about the same size," replied Jack.

"But why should he be disguised and prowling about the woods in the measley rig he had on?"

"That's what I can't fathom, Lafe."

"If he was out searching for that buried silver, he might just as well have been doing it in decent clothes and without a disguise, for all I can see."

"Yet there may have been some urgent need for hiding his identity while he was so engaged, even if we are unable to see it."

"That's right, too," admitted Lafe.

"Or," added Jack, "he may not have been the tramp at all. The tramp may have been another man, though there certainly seems to be a connection between the two, if there are two."

"On account of Murdock's swiping that letter out of your pocket?"

"What he probably thought was the letter," corrected Jack.

"Well, you knew what I meant."

"Certainly."

"There's one mighty sure thing, Jack," Lafe now

declared. "If Murdock really thought he was stealing the letter lost by that tramp, he either must have been the tramp himself, or else he must know him and have seen him since your scrap with him in the woods."

"That is plain on the face of it," nodded Jack. "Otherwise, Murdock could not have known anything about the tramp's letter."

"Mebbe the two of 'em are friends," suggested Lafe.

"Possibly."

"And mebbe the tramp told Murdock about the letter, and got him to lay for you and try to recover it."

"That might be reasonable, Lafe, except for one thing."

"What is that?"

"It is not easy to see how a man of Murdock's cloth, who apparently is a respectable man from New York, can be on a friendly footing with any genuine tramp," argued Jack, with added earnestness.

"That's so, too," growled Lafe, perplexed anew. "Gee whittaker! but this affair is getting my thinking machine into an awful tangle. The more I think about it, the more mixed up it grows."

Jack Lightfoot now laughed heartily at the expression on Lafe's round face, but was fain to admit that he felt nearly as much mystified himself.

For several minutes both boys sat digging into the problem without speaking, and Jack was the first to break the silence.

"Well, Lafe, there is but one thing for us to do," said he.

"What's that?"

"We must fall back upon what we are sure of, and act only upon that, letting everything else go by the board."

"Jimminy!" exclaimed Lafe, with a dubious grimace. "I'm not sure that I'm sure of anything. The circumstantial evidence is so conflicting, as they say in the courts, that I'm really all at sea."

"Well, we're comparatively sure of one thing, Lafe," replied Jack more gravely.

"Of what?"

"We know that Murdock didn't go into my pocket after my purse, nor my handkerchief, nor the like of them."



"Surely not."

"He went after just what he thought he got—a letter," Jack forcibly continued. "He saw me put it there, and he schemed very artfully to get it away from me undetected. That was perfectly plain, Lafe."

"No doubt of it, Jack."

"Now, to go a step further, it is equally plain that he can have had no object in getting hold of any letter or paper belonging to me, for I was a total stranger to him."

"That's so."

"I know, besides, that I have no letter or paper of my own that could be of the slightest interest to him, or anybody else. Hence, Lafe, there can be but one logical conclusion, and that is that Murdock was after the letter I found, belonging to Tony, the tramp."

"That is plain as twice two, Jack," cried Lafe. "Of that much, at least, we are dead sure."

"And that much proves one more thing."

"Yes."

"It proves that some relation exists between Murdock and the tramp who lost the letter," declared Jack. "There is no possible way around that."

"Right again," nodded Lafe, with countenance beginning to clear. "You've got a good head for reasoning out problems, Jack. I wish I had one like it."

"It's not so much a matter of head-work," smiled Jack. "I'm merely taking those features of the case of which we are sure, and trying to see to what they will lead."

"If I keep at 'em long enough," grinned Lafe, "they'll lead me to a lunatic asylum all right."

"Not quite as bad as that, Lafe, I guess," laughed Jack.

"Mighty near it."

Then Lafe surprised himself by being struck with an idea, and he suddenly exclaimed:

"Say! here's a point, Jack."

"Well?"

"Why was Murdock, or the tramp himself, in case they're not the same, so anxious to recover that letter?"

"That suggests the very point at which I, too, was arriving," said Jack. "There can be but one probable

reason for his wishing to recover it, and so get the letter out of another's hand."

"You think the letter must contain something he fears to have known by others?"

"Exactly."

"Some give-away in it, eh?"

"That's my idea," nodded Jack.

"Have you still got the letter?"

"Yes."

"Let's have another look at it," cried Lafe. "If there is any give-away in it, Jack, we must dig it out if it takes a leg."

"As I remember it," remarked Jack, "it appeared to be only an ordinary business letter. If there is anything more to it, it must be under the surface."

"Between the lines, eh?"

"Something of that kind."

"That it?"

"Yes."

Jack Lightfoot had drawn from his pocket the letter dropped by the tramp that afternoon, and once more he carefully smoothed the crumpled sheet.

Then both boys drew their chairs up to the table, and under the brighter rays of the lamp they began to study the written page.

Jack Lightfoot was the first to break the silence.

"There is one other point that now occurs to me, Lafe," said he. "It strikes me as being quite an important one."

"What is it, Jack?"

"If the tramp was in the woods searching for that buried silver, and if this letter was written to him, the two facts would indicate that it was written by one of the men who stole and buried the silver."

"Gee! that's a strong point, Jack," cried Lafe eagerly. "What's Dillon's full name?"

"Bill Dillon."

"Then he probably didn't write it, for this letter's signed Jim."

Then Lafe suddenly came out of his chair with a bound, adding excitedly:

"But Wagstaff's name's James Wagstaff. I've seen it in the newspapers. Jimminy beeswax! I'll bet that the letter was written by Jim Wagstaff."



Though naturally much more cool and collected than Lafe, Jack Lightfoot for a moment shared some of his excitement. It was an important discovery, indeed, if Wagstaff were the writer of the letter, for it pointed to a possible key to the mystery, as Jack quickly reasoned.

"Yet he says nothing about silverware in the letter," cried Lafe, resuming his seat.

"That's true," replied Jack. "But if Wagstaff had some secret design to impart to the tramp, with whom he may be acquainted, he would not have openly mentioned the stolen silver. You know, Lafe, all letters written by the prisoners are read by the jail keeper before they are mailed."

"In that case, Jack, if Wagstaff had something to tell the tramp, or some instructions to give him, they may be hidden in the letter in some secret way known only to the two of 'em."

"That's just what I was thinking," said Jack. "Then the jailer would have thought the letter only an ordinary one, and would have sent it along through the mail."

"Sure he would!"

"Let's see if we can study out any hidden meaning in it," suggested Jack. "I'm now almost convinced that there's something under the surface."

"By gracious! we must find it out if there is," growled Lafe, trembling with excitement. "Think of that five hundred!"

For nearly an hour both boys studied the mysterious letter, reading and re-reading it, yet they could discover no secret feature which they now felt sure it contained.

It was then after nine o'clock, and Lafe was anxious to return home.

"I'll tell you what we'll do, Jack," said he. "I'll take a copy of the letter home, while you keep the original. To-morrow's Sunday, and we'll both study them further, and early Monday morning I can see you again. Then we may compare notes."

"That's a good idea," assented Jack, proceeding to make a copy of the letter. "Come here early Monday morning, Lafe, and then if we're still in the dark we'll

decide what to do. It may be wise for us to take Kennedy, the constable, into our confidence."

## CHAPTER IX.

### JACK HITS THE NAIL ON THE HEAD.

It stormed again the following day and rained hard from morning till night. This, added to the fact that it was Sunday, convinced Jack that no sane man would attempt to travel six miles to the woods where the stolen silver was thought to be buried, with a view to searching for it.

He felt no misgivings, therefore, over deferring any decisive action in the matter till the following morning, and spent his leisure time that day in further studying the tramp's letter.

Try as he would, however, he could make nothing of it.

He read it and re-read it, again and again.

Then he tried reading it backward, and then the alternate lines and words.

Next he tried to make sentences out of the alternate letters, and then tried the same method with the second, third and fourth letters, and so on up to half-a-dozen.

But none of these methods led to anything intelligible, least of all to any cunningly hidden communication.

Yet he felt convinced that the tramp's letter contained something of the kind, but the mystery seemed deeper than ever and the key to it further removed.

Jack went to bed that evening with his head in a whirl.

All night long he dreamt of robbers and tramps and crumpled letters, together with all the twenty-six letters of the alphabet, the most of them turned topsyturvy, and chasing one another over sheets of paper.

He arose fresh and bright Monday morning, however, and was pleased to see that the storm had spent itself. The day was clear, with the sun out and the air crisp and invigorating.

Jack had no sooner eaten his breakfast, moreover, than a new idea struck him.

He resolved to hold the tramp's letter to a pane of glass in one of the windows, and see whether, by let-



ting the light shine through it, he could discover any hidden writing.

Not yet having confided to his mother what he was doing, Jack decided to make this attempt out in the shed room, to which he hastened as soon as he arose from the breakfast table.

Here he pressed the letter to the window-pane and for some minutes studied the sheet most carefully, yet he could find no secret writing.

He did make one discovery, however, which thus far had escaped his notice. While studying the letter in this way he found that here and there was a word which was parted in the middle. That is to say, the writer's pencil had been raised from the paper after the word was begun, and the line was not quite joined when the writing was resumed.

While holding the sheet of paper to the glass, this little peculiarity in some of the words at once became noticeable, for the light striking through the paper distinctly revealed the tiny clear space where the word was broken.

Now that he had discovered this seeming defect in some of the words, moreover, it became plainly visible upon removing the sheet of paper from the glass, and Jack grabbed a chair and sat down at the table, resolved to speedily see what this new discovery might lead to.

He hardly had done so, however, when he heard hurried steps outside, and in a moment Lafe Lampton came tearing pell-mell into the room.

"Well, what have you found, Jack?" he cried excitedly. "Can you make anything out of it?"

Instead of immediately answering the questions, Jack asked one.

"What success have you had, Lafe?" he inquired.

"None at all," growled Lafe, with a dubious headshake. "I've racked my brains for hours, till they rattled like peas in a dry pod, yet I've not been able to make head or tail to the blooming letter."

"Is that so?"

"Gee! if this keeps on, Jack, I shall go completely off my biscuit."

Jack Lightfoot laughed and glanced again at the letter.

"Well, I was not any more successful, Lafe, and till this morning I felt a good deal as you have," said he. "But now I think I have made a discovery."

"Get out!" shouted Lafe. "What is it?"

"Sit down here beside me and I'll tell you."

Lafe plunged into a chair much as a bull goes at a five-bar gate and glared down at the letter which Jack had now spread open on the table.

"Well, what is it, Jack? What is it?"

Then Jack Lightfoot pointed out to him the tiny peculiarity in some of the words of the letter, and told him how he had just discovered it.

"Gee, but that was slick!" cried Lafe, with eyes glowing. "I can now see the tiny separations very plainly, yet they are no larger than the head of a pin."

"Not as large, Lafe."

"What do you make of 'em?"

"I was just going to pick out the words in which the little peculiarity occurs," replied Jack, "and see if they make any sense when considered separately from the rest of the letter."

"You think if Wagstaff wrote the letter in this way on purpose, that the tramp also knew all about it?" inquired Lafe.

"Exactly."

"Then he could have picked the words out in the same way you suggest, and so have read the secret communication in case there is one here."

"That is the very idea, Lafe, and I am inclined to think we now are on the right track."

"Let's hope so," Lafe fervently exclaimed.

"Now take this pencil and paper," said Jack, "and write down the words as fast as I pick them out. We will take them in the same order that we find them in the tramp's letter. If nothing comes of that, we then will try transposing them."

"Let her go, old man!"

"The first one in which the peculiarity appears, Lafe, is the third of the letter, the word—glad."

"Glad?"

"Yes. Got it down?"

"Yep!" chirped Lafe. "And I'll be glad, too, if we hit the nail on the head."



Jack Lightfoot laughed and continued.

"The next one is the ninth word—to."

"Down goes to," cried Lafe; then he read what he had written: "Glad to——"

"The next one is the word—know."

"No or know?" demanded Lafe.

"K-n-o-w," cried Jack.

"Glad to know!" yelled Lafe, now almost beside himself. "Oh, gee! we're getting at it, Jack. That's the way it runs—glad to know! Holy smoke! what comes next? Hurry up, Jack, or I'll go off my perch."

Though himself somewhat excited by this promise of final success, Jack Lightfoot had better command of his feelings and governed them by force of a strong will.

"Keep cool, Lafe," he advised. "There is nothing in losing your head. If this pans out as you think, it may not reveal anything that we suspect. Keep cool, old chap!"

"Oh, go ahead with the letter," growled Lafe impatiently. "This is a fat old time to tell a chap to keep cool. What's the next word?"

Jack smiled faintly, reverting to the letter, and looked along the lines till he found the next word having the same tiny break in the pencil mark.

"It's the word—you," said he.

"Down goes you!"

"The next is—have!"

"I have it."

"And the next is—removed."

"Gosh! that's a long one but I have got it down."

"The next is—the."

"Article the!" shouted Lafe, all of a shiver of excitement.

"Now come two together," said Jack, more coolly. "They are—chief article."

"I've got 'em down, Jack."

"The next is—we," continued Jack; "and the final one is—feared."

"They're down."

"Now read what you have written."

"Glad to know you have removed the chief article we feared," read Lafe.

Then, with a wild shriek of triumph, he sprang up with a bound and cried:

"I have it, Jack! Oh, howling mackerels! I see it now, old man."

"What do you mean, Lafe?"

"The chief article feared must have been the basket which Prof. Sampson dropped near the place where the silver is buried, and the tramp to whom this letter was written must have removed it."

"By ginger! I guess you are right, Lafe," cried Jack approvingly.

"There may have been a letter before this one, Jack, telling him to get the basket out of the way," continued Lafe excitedly. "And after he did so he must have written to Wagstaff, so informing him."

"It certainly appears like it."

"You know, Jack, that basket would have been found very close to the spot where the silver is buried."

"That's right, too, Lafe."

"Gee whiz! but I can almost see that five hundred!" cried Lafe, utterly unable to govern his excitement. "Are there any more words spaced in that peculiar way?"

"Yes, quite a number of them," said Jack, reverting to the letter.

"Let's have 'em! Let's get 'em down! Holy smoke, I can't sit still!"

"I'll pick them out," said Jack complacently. "Are you ready?"

"Gosh! I've been ready an hour."

"Well, Lafe, the next word is—now."

"Down goes now!"

"The next is—get."

"Get!"

"And the next is—away."

"Now get away—oh, jimminy beeswax, but this is too rich for my blood! We're getting the whole shooting match, Jack, and no mistake. Hurry up, old man! If you don't get a move on quick, I shall go stark raving crazy!"

Jack Lightfoot laughed, despite that he, too, now was somewhat excited, and he at once continued his picking out of the oddly indicated words.

It is not necessary to further follow him in detail,



however, for the various words that exhibited the tiny peculiarity mentioned may be found in the tramp's letter printed in a previous chapter, and in the order set forth below, though separated in the letter by numerous other words which served only to act as a blind to the designing communication thus craftily imparted.

One by one Jack picked out the words, and one by one Lafe Lampton noted them down on his sheet of paper.

When the last was transcribed, both he and Jack leaned over and read the result of their clever work, and this is what they read:

"Glad to know you have removed the chief article we feared. Now get away with the white metal. From big rock near the road due north ninety paces then down. Lose no time."

As this very important evidence, as well as their own remarkably clever work, fully warranted, both boys now were in a fever of excitement, when they read this startling communication.

That it had been written by Jim Wagstaff from the jail, and that he was secretly instructing a confederate outside, most likely the stranger named Murdock, neither Jack nor Lafe now had the slightest doubt.

"The white metal!" exclaimed Jack, quoting from the transcription. "By that is meant the silverware, Lafe."

"Sure it is," cried Lafe. "That's dead open and shut."

"No wonder we did not detect any reference to silver in the letter itself."

"That's so, Jack. What do you make of the next lines?"

"It directs the tramp to the spot where the silver is buried," explained Jack, quickly seeing the point. "It says, from big rock near the road due north ninety paces then down."

"Why the dickens, then, hasn't the tramp removed it? Mebbe he has."

"I don't think so," said Jack. "If he had done so, Murdock would not have been so anxious to recover this letter."

"Gee! that's so."

"I can think of but one explanation why the tramp

did not remove the plunder," added Jack. "Possibly he could not locate the big rock mentioned, from which one evidently must walk due north ninety paces and then down."

"Down where?" growled Lafe, mystified again.

"Down into the earth, I guess," cried Jack. "It means that one must dig down. The ninety paces north from the rock takes one to the spot where the silver is buried."

"Oh, I see the point now."

"Probably the tramp could not locate the big rock," added Jack. "Very likely he was hunting for it when I encountered him Saturday afternoon."

"And that's why he was so deucedly anxious for you to get out."

"No doubt of it, Lafe. And after losing his letter he probably forgot the directions contained in it, and hence was so anxious to get it back again that he got Murdock to attempt to steal it from me."

"I'll bet Murdock was the tramp," cried Lafe. "This makes it plain why such a man as he appears to be was nosing around the woods in disguise."

"Well, I'm inclined to think you're right, Lafe."

"Do you know where the big rock is located?"

"Yes, indeed," cried Jack. "Kate Strawn called my attention to it as we passed it Saturday afternoon."

"Jimminy crickets!" exclaimed Lafe. "This makes the whole blooming business look dead easy. What's to be done first?"

"Do you know when the trial of Dillon and Wagstaff is coming off?" asked Jack, after a moment's consideration.

"Coming off!" shouted Lafe. "It's to begin this very morning."

"To-day?"

"Sure!"

"Then we must get in our work mighty lively," cried Jack, leaping to his feet.

---

## CHAPTER X.

### CONCLUSION.

It served to steady Lafe Lampton a little when Jack started in to act instead of reason. Lafe at times was



the more impulsive of the two, but Jack Lightfoot well knew the value of careful reasoning, from which only the best results of action can be obtained.

"What do you propose doing?" asked Lafe, as they left the shed room and hastened toward the house.

"First of all I am going to lay the case before Tom Kennedy, the constable," said Jack, as he pocketed the tramp's letter and the paper on which Lafe had noted down the startling communication.

"What's that for?"

"He will know what's best to be done," replied Jack, "and he's just the right man to do it promptly."

"There's no doubt of that," admitted Lafe.

"Wait till I get my hat and coat. Then we'll make a bee-line for his house."

"Go ahead."

Jack dashed into the house, returning after a moment, and the two boys hastened away together.

"It is only seven o'clock, Lafe, and we ought to find Kennedy at breakfast," remarked Jack, as they left the yard.

He proved to be right, moreover, for the constable was rising from the table just as Jack rang the door-bell, to which Kennedy quickly responded.

"Why, hello, boys!" he heartily cried, upon seeing them on the steps. "What brings you here so early?"

"Important business," said Jack promptly. "I've something to show you."

"Come in both of you. What is it, Jack?"

The boys followed him into a front room where Jack fished out the letter and paper. Then he briefly told Kennedy what they had discovered, and also gave him all of the main facts of the case.

To say that the constable was surprised would be to put it only mildly. At times, while Jack coolly laid the facts before him, he was nearly as excited as Lafe had been.

"You boys have done great work," he finally said, after many expressions of admiration and approval. "It is mightily to your credit, and it now looks to me, if this letter is reliable, as if you had the reward well nailed."

"But what's to be done, Mr. Kennedy?" Lafe impatiently asked.

"Done!" echoed the constable, bolting into the entry after his coat and hat. "I'll soon show you what's to be done. We must insure the arrest of that man, Murdock, and also make a flying visit to the woods in search of the buried silver."

"That's the stuff," cried Lafe.

"We will set both balls rolling at once," added Kennedy, as all three left the house. "You fly over to Jepson's livery stable, Lafe, and have him hitch Bay Charlie into a light wagon. That horse will whisk us out to the woods and back in less than an hour."

"You bet he will," cried Lafe. "He's a flier."

"Tell Jepson to put a couple of spades in the wagon."

"All right."

"Meantime I will go and swear out a warrant for Murdock, and take Jack along with me to point him out. We'll probably find him at the hotel, unless he's scented danger and dusted. You have the team got ready, Lafe, and wait for us at the stable."

"I'll do so," shouted Lafe, who already was hastening away.

About twenty minutes later Jack Lightfoot and the constable entered the Cranford House and proceeded to the main office. The latter now had in his pocket a warrant for Murdock's arrest.

By a stroke of good luck they met the man in the office, just as he was coming out of the breakfast room.

Kennedy knew his business and did not mince matters for an instant.

"Your name is Murdock, isn't it?" he demanded, when Jack gave him a tip that this was the man.

Murdock halted, sharply eying the constable for a moment, then said:

"Yes, that is my name."

"Well, I want you to go with me."

"With you! What's that for?"

"You are under arrest," said Kennedy bluntly. "You'd best make no stir over it, but come along quietly. Otherwise, I shall have to fit you to a pair of bangles."

Murdock gradually had become very pale.

He stood for a moment glaring fiercely at Jack, then growled with ugly harshness:



"I suppose I owe this to you, young fellow, don't I?"

Jack drew himself up with some dignity and replied quietly:

"You owe it less to me than to yourself, Mr. Murdock. I have done only my duty as I have seen it."

Murdock's lips curled a bit contemptuously, and he wheeled sharply to Kennedy, saying curtly:

"Got a warrant?"

"Yes."

"Then there's nothing to it. Come with me to get my coat and hat, and then I'm at your service. A little later, young fellow, you'll get what's coming to you for this."

The threat did not in the least frighten Jack Lightfoot, but he had the good judgment to make no reply.

At the constable's suggestion Jack waited at the hotel while Kennedy took his prisoner to the jail, there to be held pending further investigations and the verification of Jack's discoveries and suspicions.

Kennedy was absent only about ten minutes, and he and Jack then hastened to Jepson's stable, where they found Lafe waiting for them with the team in readiness to depart.

"Pile in, both of you," said the constable heartily. "We'll all three go, and make the sand fly in going."

"Did you get Murdock?" inquired Lafe, as he scrambled into the wagon.

"You bet I got him."

"We may be able to go and return before the court opens?" remarked Jack, as Kennedy, seated between the two boys, gathered up the ribbons and gave the horse the word.

"We'll make a try at it," nodded the constable. "If we can show up in court with that silverware, we will blow Dillon's lawyer sky high. Do you know where the big rock mentioned in the letter is located, Jack?"

"Yes, exactly."

"Then we ought to be able to prove this letter in a mighty few minutes after we get there."

"I can take you directly to it," said Jack.

"That's good enough," cried Kennedy. "Now then, Bay Charlie, light out as if you were doing the final heat of a county fair free for all."

The doughty constable did not spare the horse. The spirited animal himself appeared to appreciate, in fact, the urgent need of haste, and he fairly flew out of the town and over the road across the upland. The air was fresh and crisp, moreover, invigorating both to horse and riders.

It was only a little after eight when they arrived at the huge rock near the side of the woodland road, which Jack Lightfoot readily located. Here all three sprang out, and Kennedy hitched the horse to a sapling.

Meantime, Lafe yanked the two spades from the rear of the wagon, crying excitedly:

"Here's one for you, Jack. Howling mackerels! I can't wait till we get digging."

"We must get the direction first, Lafe, and pace off the distance," said Jack, more composedly.

"I've got a compass in my watch charm," said Kennedy, now rejoining the boys. "Wait a bit and we'll get the exact direction."

"That side of the rock?"

"Yes."

Standing in the brushwood and bushes, the constable now fixed upon a line due north with the aid of his compass.

"It's that way, Jack," said he, pointing through a vista of oaks and beeches.

"You walk off the ninety paces, then," suggested Jack. "Your stride will be more likely to hit the spot than ours."

"That's right, Jack."

And Kennedy now strode forth over the clearer ground, counting the paces aloud and keeping constantly on a line directly north.

Jack and Lafe followed, each bearing a spade.

"Eureka!" cried Lafe, when Kennedy's count was running up in the eighties. "Ninety will bring us squarely under that big pine tree, Jack."

"Evidently," nodded Lightfoot.

And so it did.

With the last word of his count, the constable halted nearly at the foot of the tree and kicked away some leaves and pine needles.

"Here's the spot, boys," said he. "Let's see one of the spades."



"No, no," shouted Lafe. "We're the ones to get after the stuff, if it's here. Leave us to do the digging."

Kennedy laughed, and so did Jack, for Lafe's excitement really was ludicrous at times; but both boys fell to digging with all their strength.

The dirt flew in a way not easily imagined, and Kennedy presently cried:

"I reckon you'll strike it, boys. This ground evidently has been dug up quite lately."

"It's being dug up now all right," panted Lafe.

"I should say so," laughed the constable.

"Easy!" exclaimed Jack suddenly. "I've struck something!"

His spade had come in contact with something harder than the soil, yet which evidently was not a rock.

Now working more carefully, Jack gradually loosed it from the ground and brushed away the soil with which it was covered.

It was a large article wrapped in brown paper.

Jack Lightfoot quickly gathered it up and tore off the wrapper.

Lafe vented a yell that might have been heard a mile away.

"Wow! It's a silver teapot!" he roared, capering around the hole like a madman.

"That's what it is, Lafe, and you two boys have hit the nail on the head," cried Kennedy, impulsively shaking hands with both of them.

"Here is Mr. Dillworthy's monogram on it," said Jack, restraining his feeling of triumph. "He will be delighted to recover his property."

"And we to nail that reward!" declared Lafe.

"Probably we shall find all of the silver buried here," said Kennedy, now taking one of the spades. "I know about what is lost, and we must waste no time in getting it all together, if possible, and returning to Cranford. I wish to reach the court-room before the trial begins. This will settle the fate of those rascals, Dillon and Wagstaff, and probably that of Murdock."

The constable was correct in one and all of his predictions. A little further work resulted in uncovering the entire lot of stolen silver, some of which had not

even been wrapped in paper, and with the property in the wagon the little party returned to Cranford as rapidly as they had come.

In court that morning the incriminating evidence was produced against the prisoners, to their dismay and the great excitement of all observers, and their conviction speedily followed.

In Murdock's room at the hotel was found a tramp's disguise, and he afterward was shown to have been concerned in the robbery.

It appeared that he had gone to New York to arrange for selling the plunder, which the others meantime buried for fear of detection, and upon Murdock's return had resulted the secret correspondence for the protection of the thieves.

All three were convicted, however, and the praise of the public for the clever work of Jack Lightfoot and Lafe hardly knew bounds.

The reward was promptly paid, moreover, and Jack at once turned it over for a fund under his agreement with the other boys.

The whole business was the talk of the town for days, and Jack and Lafe felt a worthy pride in their well-earned success.

Yet Jack quietly remarked to Lafe, as they were parting on the street at noon after the trial:

"After all, Lafe, I guess there's a little something in luck, isn't there?"

"In luck?" grinned Lafe delightedly. "You bet there is, Jack! Gee! but what a dinner I can eat after this!"

#### THE END.

Next week's issue will be "Jack Lightfoot's Triumph; or, Back From a Watery Grave," and marks a crisis in the career of the young athlete whose fortunes we have been following for so long. No one who is at all interested in the future of the Cranford boys can afford to miss this particular story, for it is what might be called the keystone, in the center of the arch to be formed by succeeding issues. Besides, it is a strong tale in itself, and will thrill the nerves of all who buy it. So we say again, don't forget to order your copy early, and you will not be disappointed. No. 46 will appear next week.



# HOW TO DO THINGS

By AN OLD ATHLETE.

Timely essays and hints upon various athletic sports and pastimes, in which our boys are usually deeply interested, and told in a way that may be easily understood. Instructive articles may be found in back numbers of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, as follows: No. 31, "How to Make a Cheap Skiff." No. 32, "Archery." No. 33, "Cross-Country Running." No. 34, "The Game of Lacrosse." No. 35, "The Boy With a Hobby for Collecting." No. 36, "Football, and How to Play It." No. 37, "A Practice Game." No. 38, "How to Play Football—Training." No. 39, "The Men in the Line." No. 40, "The Men Behind." No. 41, "Signal Systems." No. 42, "Team Play." No. 43, "The End of the Season." No. 44, "A Gymnasium Without Apparatus." (I.)

## A GYMNASIUM WITHOUT APPARATUS.

### PART TWO.

Last week we described the first few exercises in the series. As you probably remember, the simplicity and the inexpensiveness of this method, bringing it within the reach of all, was dwelt upon for the purpose of impressing our readers with the fact that no one need neglect the proper care of his physique on the ground that apparatus costs too much or that he does not have enough time. By adopting the few simple rules laid down in that article any boy with a little perseverance can soon become expert in this branch of physical culture. After a few months devoted to the work the results will be surprising, considering the comparatively short time given over to the practise of the exercises.

The whole secret of the thing, however, is regularity. Ten minutes each and every day for six months will produce better results than half an hour every other day. Some people in beginning a course of physical training lose sight of this fact, not realizing its importance. For instance, if it is an unusually cold morning and the room feels like an ice-house when you get up, you might give in to the temptation to lie abed till it is time to dress for breakfast, thinking that you will make up in exercising the following morning by doubling the time so as to include the ten or fifteen minutes you failed to devote to the exercises the previous morning. Do not make any such mistake in *your* work, otherwise you will not only miss the best results but will probably defeat your aim to acquire a fine physical development at the very threshold of your endeavors.

Suppose, for instance, that you wanted to become an expert pitcher or hold an important position on a football team. Wouldn't you be willing to qualify yourself by practising all the time that was deemed necessary by the captain of the team? Of course you would. And it is the same in training your body for the sake of putting yourself in a better physical shape. As a matter of fact you will find that day after day it will be easier to go on with your exercising as your interest increases in the work and you begin to realize that the time is not very far distant when the desired results will begin to plainly show.

If you have been practising for the last week the four exercises described in the previous issue your muscles have gained a certain suppleness that will make the following movements much easier to master. After taking the breathing exercise mentioned in last week's instalment begin with the

### FIFTH EXERCISE.

This exercise is intended to develop the muscles in the hands. Assume the same position as for the first exer-

cise. Close your hands as hard as possible and throw them open with a great deal of force, at the same time spreading the fingers and the thumbs out wide. Keep doing this until it begins to tire you.

### SIXTH EXERCISE.

Take the first position—see cut. Crook the arms till they are nearly V shape by bringing them up smartly to a vertical position. The palms of the hands should be turned in toward each other, but not quite touching. Force the arms upward to their full length. Then bring them down backward and let them gradually fall to the sides of the body. Repeat.

### SEVENTH EXERCISE.

This is known as the *forearm horizontal*. Raise the forearms only till they are on a line with the waist, keeping the elbows close to the body, the hands clenched, with the backs turned down. Force the arms out straight in front of you, turning the backs of the hands up as you do it. Then the arms should be brought back quickly to the first position, forcing the elbows and shoulders to the rear. Repeat.

### EIGHTH EXERCISE.

The four following exercises are for developing the trunk. In this one begin by raising the hands and placing them on your hips, the fingers being turned to the rear and the thumbs extending in front. Bend over in front as far as you can, being careful not to move from the hips downward. Then raise yourself and bend as far back to the rear as possible. Keep the knees rigid while going through these motions. Repeat.

### NINTH EXERCISE.

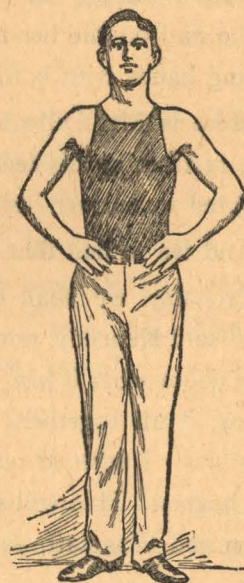
Place the hands on the hips the same as in the other exercise. Bend the trunk to the right, taking pains not to twist the body or lift either heel. Bring the body to an erect position and then perform the same movement on the left side. Repeat.

### TENTH EXERCISE.

This is the last of the trunk exercises. Let the hands rest on the hips as in the other two exercises; bend the



(FIG. 1)



(FIG. 2)

trunk to the right and the rear as if you were describing a circle, as in figure two. After making this half circle

(Continued on page 30.)



# A CHAT WITH YOU

Under this general head we purpose each week to sit around the camp fire, and have a heart-to-heart talk with those of our young readers who care to gather there, answering such letters as may reach us asking for information with regard to various healthy sports, both indoor and out. We should also be glad to hear what you think of the leading characters in your favorite publication. It is the editor's desire to make this department one that will be eagerly read from week to week by every admirer of the Jack Lightfoot stories, and prove to be of valuable assistance in building up manly, healthy Sons of America. All letters received will be answered immediately, but may not appear in print under five weeks, owing to the fact that the publication must go to press far in advance of the date of issue. Those who favor us with correspondence will please bear this in mind, and exercise a little patience.

THE EDITOR.

The aim of my life is to get into West Point as a cadet. Please tell me what I must do. I am within the age limit the law marks for the admission of young fellows. My father is a citizen by birth. I take ALL-SPORTS regularly, and like it very much. Please tell me about this business of becoming a cadet, for I can think of nothing else.

ALBERT W. STOKES.

Wheeling, W. Va.

You should apply to your congressman, stating all the conditions and expressing your wish to enter the lists of those desirous of entering West Point. He will give you all the necessary information, and if you are bright enough to toe the mark your success is assured.

I am a reader of ALL-SPORTS, and noticing that you seem to be willing to answer questions concerning things that interest boys, I'm going to "chip in," as they say. We have a large pond near where I live, and in the winter time I've often seen big muskrats swimming under the ice. Is there any way to get them? I've trapped a lot in the fall, but I wish I could spear some of the ones I can see under the ice. They don't seem to care much about us, and act like they knew they were safe. Please tell me if you know anything I can do. I want to sell the skins and buy a gun, so that every dollar counts.

Clark's Mills, Me.

WALTER JACKSON.

Have you ever tried "stunning" those muskrats, Walter? This is done in many parts of the country. In our boyhood days we secured many a catfish and other varieties in that way. The animals, if chased from their winter holes in the bank, swim just under the ice, and if the latter is just the right thickness, a heavy blow from a big mallet or club seems to half stun them, as their heads are in contact with the ice while swimming. A hole must be quickly cut, and the half-stupefied animal dragged out. Take care he does not give you a ferocious nip with his fierce teeth. Dispatch him immediately with a crack on the head. Sometimes, when the conditions are just right, a boy can secure quite a creditable bag of game in this novel way. We hope you wait a little longer and purchase a good gun. A cheap one may turn out well, but there are too many chances about it.

Please print a letter from an up-State boy who thinks that the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY is the best ever. I have read every number since it first came out, and only wish that the weekly had started years ago, so that I could have had the pleasure of reading these interesting stories so much longer. I can hardly wait each week for the newsman to get his supply. When he does get it, I am always the first boy in our neighborhood to get a copy. The newsdealer has got so that he calls me "the first-nighter," as I am always on deck to get my copy of the great and only ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY the moment they come in.

Rochester, N. Y.

HAROLD BLACK.

It is a pleasure to receive letters from young men like you, who are sincerely appreciative of the attractive features of this weekly. We have several "first-nighters" from your city who are impatient each week to get their copies before anyone else; nevertheless, you seem to be very eager to retain the title of "first-nighter," and deserve it, too.

ALL-SPORTS has done much for me, and I'm so grateful that whenever I get a chance to sound its praises I do it. I have convinced quite a few of my friends that it is, by long odds, the best five-cent weekly for the youth of America. Not one of them is sorry he began to read it; so, as they say, the proof of the pudding is in the eating of it, and I guess they know by this time that all I said was true. To tell the truth, six months ago I was in a bad way. I smoked cigarettes and seemed to have no desire to join any of the games boys like. Then I chanced to read ALL-SPORTS, and some good advice you gave a fellow struck home to me. I had quite a shock, and though I tried to laugh it off, I couldn't forget. Day and night it kept at me. I went and bought several other numbers of the library, and before I finished them I had pledged my word to my mother never, so long as I lived, to smoke another "coffin spike." I didn't stop there. I began to exercise, played ball with my boy friends, took long walks and runs over the hills. The improvement in my feelings was immediate, and so pleasant that I longed to go deeper, and now I'm a different fellow, my movements are quick, my eye clear, my digestion—well, I'd like to try a go with Lufe to see which could stow away the most grub. So you see what I owe to ALL-SPORTS. Perhaps I'm not the only one you've helped. I know one little woman, bless her, who is your good friend, and who can never say too much in your praise. Please give Mr. Stevens my respects.

W. G. R.

Trenton, N. J.

Really, it's worth something to receive a letter like that. We only hope that, as you say, there may also be others who have been benefited, and who in return will spread the ALL-SPORTS' gospel abroad in the land. Advertising at the hands of loving friends is the best that any paper or magazine can have.

Please decide a question that has been in dispute between a young boy friend and myself. We are both ardent admirers of ALL-SPORTS, and have read the *Tip Top Weekly* for many years. He says the same writer is engaged upon both publications, and I deny this. So, you see, it's a case of "scissors-knife" with us, and unless you come to the rescue, I'm afraid it will destroy a friendship of years. I'd hate to give up Bob, but I know I'm right and I'm going to stick to it until convinced otherwise. He tries to prove it in many ways, but, on my part, I can see numerous things that seem to make it impossible. Now, be good to us, Mr. Editor. Save Bob by letting him down easy, for he's dreadfully set in his ways. Perhaps you may be surprised to know that a girl takes such an interest in a paper devoted to sports, but I don't see why you should. I've many a time cried because I was debarred from having the fun boys do, and I've read all the boys' books I could ever get hold of. I think, however, on account of Bob, I'd better not have my name in print, but just sign myself,

TOM BOY.

Philadelphia, Pa.

Your letter is very interesting. We are not surprised in the least, because we seem to be hearing from the girls quite frequently. However, you win and Bob loses. Mr. Maurice Stevens and the author of the *Tip Top* stories are two entirely distinct personages, though, we believe, some years ago, in a pinch, he did serve with Mr. Standish for a while, and thus, doubtless, in a measure, fell in with the style that has ever been a distinguishing characteristic of the Merriwell stories.



Are there any other libraries like the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY? Although I have been a great admirer of it, and feel perfectly satisfied with it, my curiosity has been awakened by friends who say that they have read others written on the same plan. Anyway, they say that they like the ALL-SPORTS the best.

Springfield, Mass.

JAMES MARTAIN.

Yes, there have been other libraries placed before the reading public in imitation of ALL-SPORTS by unscrupulous publishers who are envious of our success, but the libraries are apt to be soon withdrawn, as the readers must see that the imitations are too feeble to stand on their own merits, and the publishers are bound to lose money. "Imitation is the sincerest flattery," proved to be true in the case of the ALL-SPORTS; and the manner in which the other libraries follow our lead in printing a cast of characters, and other original features, proves that an imitation does not, as a rule, have much to recommend it to those who are not satisfied with anything but the real thing. The American youth have been entirely satisfied with our publication ever since it was started, and have the feeling that whenever we put a new library before them, it will not only come up to the usual high standard, but will have features to recommend it which the previous one did not have.

I have read the articles on "How To Do Things" in the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY, and like them a great deal. Everybody I know says he has learned lots about sports which he couldn't find in books. It is a great help to boys to have these talks. The boys where I live have formed a club, and go in for athletic exercise just as Jack and his friends do, and we find the articles just the thing. We think the publishers know what they are about, and we want to thank the Winner Publishing Company for printing stories which just suit. Give our regards to Mr. Stevens.

JAMES BRICE.

Garfield, Mo.

We thank you for your kind letter, and hope to number you and your friends in the ALL-SPORTS readers' club for a long time. We are glad that the articles on "How To Do Things" have proved useful, but we are not surprised that they have. They are written to help the admirers of Jack Lightfoot develop themselves physically and morally as Jack did, because you understand, James, that to succeed in sport a fellow must be clean and square. Jack's great failing was his lack of self-confidence or moral courage, and if you and your friends learn from Jack the lessons he learned from bitter experience, ALL-SPORTS will justify in your case its purpose of being "the athletic guide of the up-to-date manly American boy."

The "All-Sports Reading Club" would not be without the weekly. It has given us a great deal of pleasure. All of the boys in the club say that it is the best ever. We are getting all the boys in this town interested in the famous library, and expect to increase the number of readers in a way that will surprise you. With best regards to the Winner Publishing Company, we remain, the Big Four,

CHARLES JENKS,  
LAWRENCE B. HILL,  
STROKE LUTHERS,  
PADDY ROSS.

San Diego, Cal.

Your report of what you have done and what you intend to do in the near future speaks well for the energy of the boys in your club, and we thank you all for your efforts in behalf of the library.

("How to do Things")—Continued from page 28.

three or four times go through the same operation on the opposite side.

#### ELEVENTH EXERCISE.

This exercise, if practised faithfully, will give you very supple muscles and an easy carriage. It takes the kinks

out of one's body and has a very thorough "limbering up" effect. Raise the arms from your sides, having them extended to their full length, till the hands meet over your head. The palms should be turned to the front, the fingers pointed upward and the thumbs locked. Have the right thumb in front of the other. The shoulders should be pressed back; at the same time keep the arms and knees perfectly straight and bend forward till the hands touch the floor, if possible. After bending over as far as you can, straighten up, bringing the outstretched arms over your head. It is not likely that you will be able to touch the floor the first time, since only a few people, as a rule, can do it, but after your body gets used to this exercise it will not be difficult, and you will then begin to derive the full benefit from it. Continue several times; though for the first few days do not indulge in it too freely, as it will make you very sore through the thighs and the muscles of the back.

#### TWELFTH EXERCISE.

The arms should be thrust out in front of you till they are on a straight line with the shoulders, the hands being palm down. Make a slow bend from the hips, keeping the body, from the knees down, in an immovable position, bringing the arms backward and as far up toward the shoulders as you are able. After that straighten the trunk, swinging the arms to the front. Do this several times.

#### THIRTEENTH EXERCISE.

This exercise and the three following are designed to develop the leg muscles. In this first one place the hands on the hips as in the eighth exercise. Begin to lower the body, gradually separating the knees, as if you were going to sit upon your heels; but be careful to keep the trunk in an erect position. See that the heels are kept flat on the ground. Raise the body, at the same time bringing the knees together till they touch, when you regain the position of "attention." This exercise is known as the *half-bend*.

#### FOURTEENTH EXERCISE.

The instructors in a soldier's drill refer to this as the *full-bend*. You begin this by assuming the same position as in exercise eight, the hands being placed on the hips. Raise the heels, throwing your weight on the balls of the feet, and lower the body, separating the knees as far as possible and keeping the head and the trunk erect. In other words, this is done as if you were going to squat down on your heels and balance yourself on the balls of the feet. Raise up gradually, at the same time straighten the knees and lower the heels to the ground. When this exercise is done slowly considerable tension is put upon the muscles of the calves and the thighs, bringing powerful action to bear upon them without any harmful strain. Repeat several times.

#### FIFTEENTH EXERCISE.


Place the hands on the hips as in the first position of the foregoing exercise and balance yourself on the right foot while extending the left in front of you a distance of about fifteen inches. Keep the knee rigid and draw the leg back of you. After swinging the foot backward and forward place it on the floor and go through the same movement with the other foot.

If you follow the instructions given in this talk and in the one on the same subject published last week you will have a set of physical exercises sufficient for your needs.



# **STIRRING SEA TALES**

## **PAUL JONES WEEKLY**

TORIES of the adventures of the gallant American hero, Paul Jones, in the battles he had with the British men-o'-war during the Revolution.

The history of his brave deeds forms some of the most interesting and brilliant pages in American history, and the stories which appear in "Paul Jones Weekly" are so fascinating and full of the spirit of patriotism that no real boy can resist the temptation to read them.

### **LIST OF TITLES**

- 1—Paul Jones' Cruise for Glory; or, The Sign of the Coiled Rattlesnake.
- 2—Paul Jones at Bay; or, Striking a Blow for Liberty.
- 3—Paul Jones' Pledge; or, The Tiger of the Atlantic.
- 4—Paul Jones' Bold Swoop; or, Cutting Out a British Supply Ship.
- 5—Paul Jones' Strategy; or, Outwitting the Fleets of Old England.
- 6—Paul Jones' Long Chase; or, The Last Shot in the Locker.
- 7—Out With Paul Jones; or, Giving Them a Bad Fright Along the English Coast.
- 8—Paul Jones Afloat and Ashore; or, Stirring Adventures in London Town.
- 9—Paul Jones' Swamp Trail; or, Outwitting the Coast Raiders.
- 10—Paul Jones' Defiance; or, How the Virginia Planter Invaded "Robbers' Roost."
- 11—Paul Jones' Double; or, Cruise of the "Floating Feather."
- 12—Adrift With Paul Jones; or, The Last of the Lagoon Pirates.

### **PRICE, FIVE CENTS**

For Sale by all Newsdealers, or Sent by the Publishers Upon Receipt of Price

**The Winner Library Co., 165 West 15th St., New York**



# COME BOYS, COME GET THE ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

"Teach the American boy how to become an athlete and so lay the foundation of a constitution greater than that of the United States."  
—Wise Sayings from Tip Top.

**Y**OU like fun, adventure and mystery, don't you? Well, you can find them all in the pages of the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. As the name implies, the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY is devoted to the sports that all young people delight in. It has bright, handsome, colored covers, and each story is of generous length. You are looking for a big five cents worth of good reading and you can get it here. Ask your newsdealer for any of the titles listed below. He has them in stock. Be sure to get ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. Like other good things it has its imitations.

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| 16—Jack Lightfoot's Strategy; or, Hare-and-Hounds Over Cranford Hills.           | 33—Jack Lightfoot's Cleverness; or, The Boy Who Butted In.                       |
| 17—Jack Lightfoot in the Saddle; or, A Jockey for Just One Day.                  | 34—Jack Lightfoot's Decision; or, That Chestnut of "Playing Against Ten Men."    |
| 18—Jack Lightfoot's Dilemma; or, A Traitor on the Diamond.                       | 35—Jack Lightfoot, Pennant-Winner; or, Winding up the Four Town League.          |
| 19—Jack Lightfoot's Cyclone Finish; or, How Victory Was Snatched From Defeat.    | 36—Jack Lightfoot's Pledge; or, Bound in Honor.                                  |
| 20—Jack Lightfoot in Camp; or, Young Athletes at Play in the Wilderness.         | 37—Jack Lightfoot's Nerve; or, A Desperate Mutiny at the "Gym."                  |
| 21—Jack Lightfoot's Disappearance; or, The Turning-up of an Old Enemy.           | 38—Jack Lightfoot's Halfback; or, Playing the Giants of the League.              |
| 22—Jack Lightfoot's "Stone Wall" Infield; or, Making a Reputation in the League. | 39—Jack Lightfoot's Gridiron Boys; or, Leading a Patched-up Team to Victory.     |
| 23—Jack Lightfoot's Talisman; or, The Only Way to Win Games in Baseball.         | 40—Jack Lightfoot's Trap Shooting; or, Up Against the Champions of the Gun Club. |
| 24—Jack Lightfoot's Mad Auto Dash; or, Speeding at a Ninety Mile Clip.           | 41—Jack Lightfoot's Touch-down; or, A Hard Nut to Crack at Highland.             |
| 25—Jack Lightfoot Afloat; or, The Cruise of the Canvas Canoes.                   | 42—Jack Lightfoot's Flying Wedge; or, How Kirtland Won the Game for Cranford.    |
| 26—Jack Lightfoot's Hard Luck; or, A Lightning Triple Play in the Ninth.         | 43—Jack Lightfoot's Great Kick; or, The Tackle That Did Not Work.                |
| 27—Jack Lightfoot's Iron Arm; or, How the New "Spit" Ball Worked the Charm.      | 44—Jack Lightfoot's Duck-Blind; or, A Strange Mystery of the Swamp.              |
| 28—Jack Lightfoot on the Mat; or, The Jiu-Jitsu Trick that Failed to Work.       | 45—Jack Lightfoot's Luck; or, Glorious Days of Sport Ahead.                      |
| 29—Jack Lightfoot's All-Sports Team; or, How Lufe Lampton Threw the Hammer.      | 46—Jack Lightfoot's Triumph; or, Back from a Watery Grave.                       |
| 30—Jack Lightfoot in the Box; or, The Mascot that "Hoodooed" the Nine.           | 47—Jack Lightfoot Down in Dixie; or, The Voyage of a Single-Hand Cruiser.        |
| 31—Jack Lightfoot's Lucky Find; or, The New Man Who Covered "Short."             | 48—Jack Lightfoot's Plans; or, Wrecked on Indian River.                          |
| 32—Jack Lightfoot, Archer; or, The Strange Secret an Arrow Revealed.             | 49—Jack Lightfoot on Snowshoes; or, The Chase of the Great Moose.                |
|  | 50—Jack Lightfoot Snowed-Up; or, Lost in the Trackless Canadian Wilderness.      |

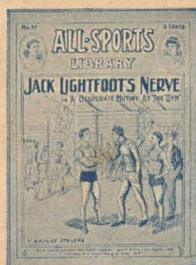
## PRICE, FIVE CENTS.

: : : For Sale by all Newsdealers, or sent, postpaid, upon receipt of price by publishers : : :

**WINNER LIBRARY CO., 165 West Fifteenth St., NEW YORK**



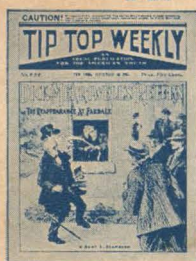
# THE FAVORITE LIST OF FIVE-CENT LIBRARIES



## ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY

All sports that boys are interested in, are carefully dealt with in the ALL-SPORTS LIBRARY. The stories deal with the adventures of plucky lads while indulging in healthy pastimes.

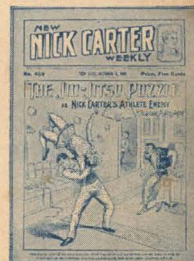
## TIP TOP WEEKLY



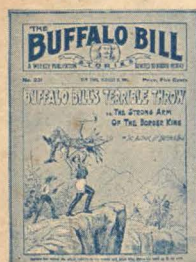
Frank and Dick Merriwell are two brothers whose adventures in college and on the athletic field are of intense interest to the American boy of to-day. They prove that a boy does not have to be a rowdy to have exciting sport.

## NICK CARTER WEEKLY

We know, boys, that there is no need of introducing to you Nicholas Carter, the greatest sleuth that ever lived. Every number containing the adventures of Nick Carter has a peculiar, but delightful, power of fascination.



## BUFFALO BILL STORIES



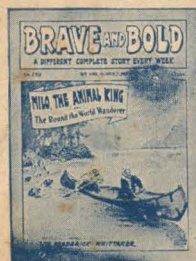
Buffalo Bill is the hero of a thousand exciting adventures among the Redskins. These are given to our boys only in the Buffalo Bill Stories. They are bound to interest and please you.

## PAUL JONES WEEKLY

Do not think for a second, boys, that these stories are a lot of musty history, just sugar-coated. They are all new tales of exciting adventure on land and sea, in all of which boys of your own age took part.



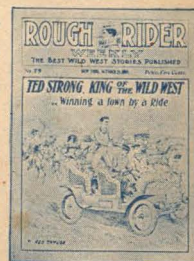
## BRAVE AND BOLD



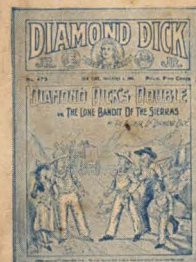
Every boy who prefers variety in his reading matter, ought to be a reader of Brave and Bold. All these were written by authors who are past masters in the art of telling boys' stories. Every tale is complete in itself.

## ROUGH RIDER WEEKLY

Ted Strong was appointed deputy marshal by accident, but he resolves to use his authority and rid his ranch of some very tough bullies. He does it in such a slick way that everyone calls him "King of the Wild West" and he certainly deserves his title.



## DIAMOND DICK WEEKLY



The demand for stirring stories of Western adventure is admirably filled by this library. Every up-to-date boy ought to read just how law and order are established and maintained on our Western plains by Diamond Dick, Bertie, and Handsome Harry.

## BOWERY BOY LIBRARY

The adventures of a poor waif whose only name is "Bowery Billy." Billy is the true product of the streets of New York. No boy can read the tales of his trials without imbibing some of that resource and courage that makes the character of this homeless boy stand out so prominently.

